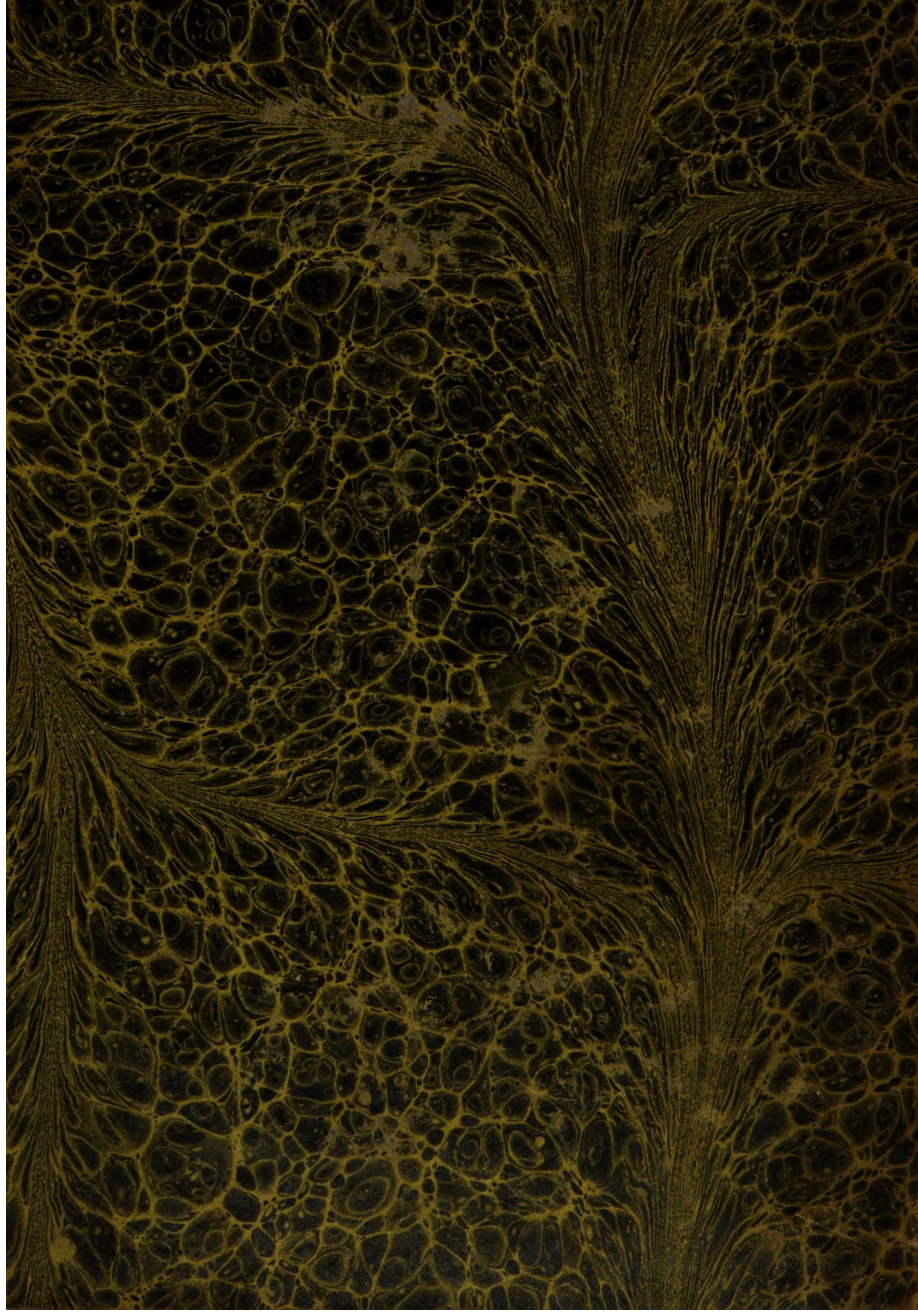




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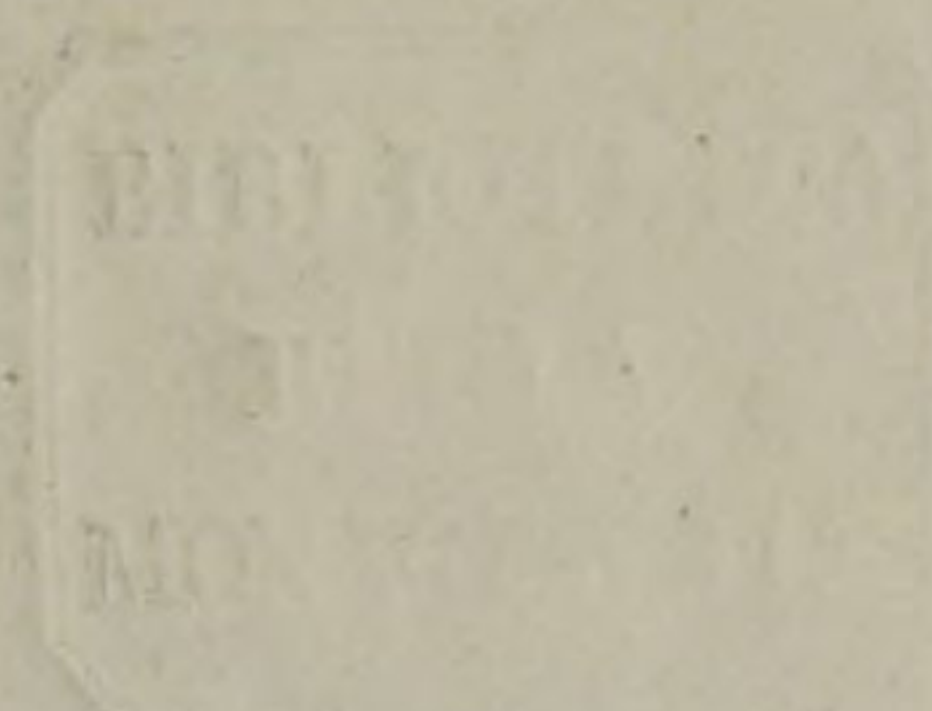
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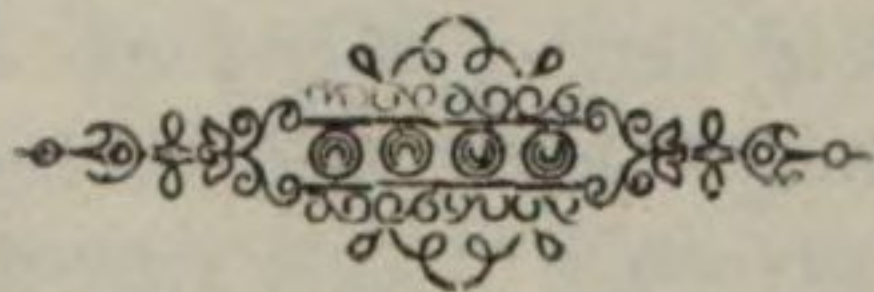


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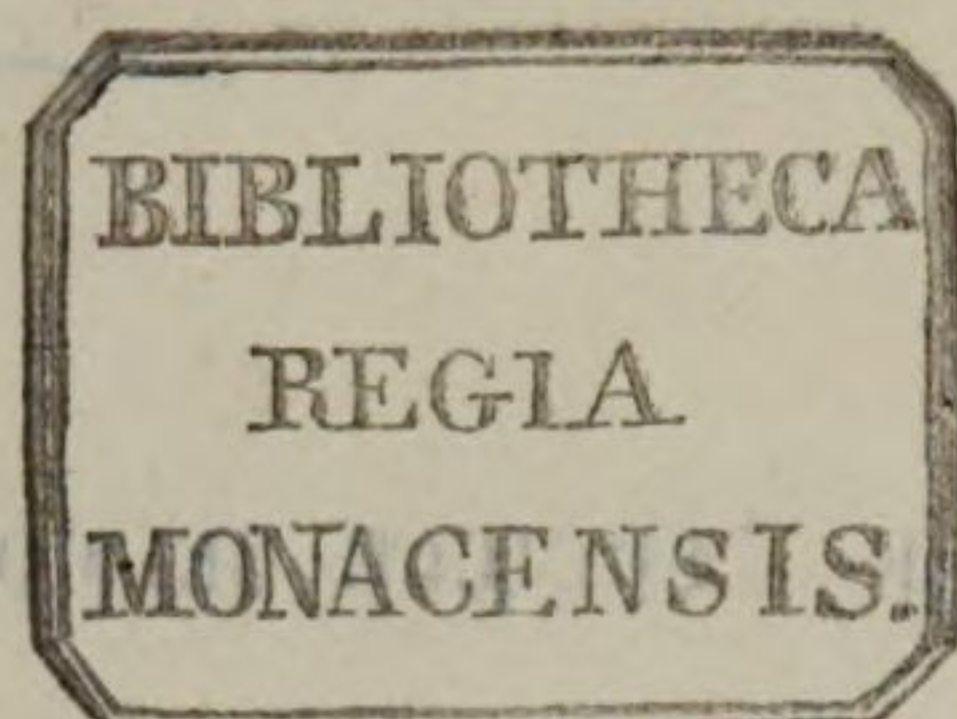
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1850

ERNEST VANE.

BY ALEXANDER BAILLIE COCHRANE, M.P.

TO THE HONOURABLE
GEORGE PERCY SYDNEY SMYTHE,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

By ALEXANDER BAILLIE COCHRANE,

IN THE PRESUMPTUOUS HOPE THAT THEIR TWO NAMES
MAY BE ASSOCIATED IN LITERATURE, AS THEY HAVE BEEN
IN LONG AND UNINTERRUPTED FRIENDSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

It was a cold March evening, the lamps in Sackville Street were lit, and cast a flickering pale uncertain light through the drops of rain which plunged from the roofs of the houses upon the pavement; the shrill clear horns of the guards were heard above the tramp of the horses, and the swift rattle of the wheels of the mail coaches as they rolled along Piccadilly. The shutters of most of the houses were closed, but from the principal floor of an hotel, situated near the corner of Sackville Street and Vere Street, bright rays of fire-light were gleaming, occasionally the curtains were partially drawn aside, and a small fair head might be seen looking anxiously up and down the street, as though expecting some immediate arrival; but all the passengers bent on business or pleasure hurried by, only one or two occasionally casting a hurried glance at the window, when the head was quickly withdrawn. At last the patience of the fair occupant must have been quite exhausted, for she rang the bell almost impatiently, waited at the door until it was answered, and then asked the servant who appeared whether Mr. Leslie had put off the dinner hour. The servant answered in the negative.

"Did he not say at what time he should return?" the young lady asked.

"He told me to have his things to dress at the usual time," was the reply.

The lady took up a book and began to read, but her eye had scarcely skimmed down the first page, when a heavy footstep was heard upon the stair, she started from her seat, letting her book and work both fall to the

ground, and ran up to the door exclaiming "My dearest father."

The person who entered the room was the type of a class with which most men in the course of their lives become familiar. He had thick-set and lumbering limbs, but, large as he was, the head still seemed out of proportion to his body; it hung a little on one side, as though borne down by its own weight. The hair was short and grizzly; and there was a heaviness in the glance which at first sight conveyed the notion of an overloaded brain, but a close observer might have detected a quick cunning glance in the little grey twinkling eye which glistened beneath the pent house of overhanging eye-brow; the lines of the face were strongly marked, indicating habits of deep and patient thought; and from the compressed upper lip it might be judged that the practice of self-command was habitual to him; and, indeed, among no class is self-command and control of feature so requisite as in that class which this man represented,—the moneyed interest,—where the betrayal of emotion is at times not less to be dreaded than the loss of a galleon, or the failure of some gigantic speculation; but if, in all physical characteristics, Mr. Leslie aptly illustrated the man of the counting-house, of shrewd guesses and practical dealings, it was impossible not at the same time to perceive from his appearance that he was a man of great consideration in the society which he frequented. His dress had an attention bestowed upon it rarely found among those whose time is occupied in business; he was scrupulously neat, and if he erred it was almost on the side of a certain dandyism; there was a peculiar pretension to an accuracy of fit and tie, which was slightly out of character and keeping with the stern concentrated look which we have described.

Talleyrand has said that, to study a man, you must notice not the countenance but the voice; but there is frequently as much character in a man's footsteps as in either his countenance or his voice; and an attentive practised ear might have traced the whole of Mr.

Leslie's life in the heavy measured pace with which he ascended the creaking stair, and the methodical manner with which he rubbed his feet for the second time on the mat, he having already performed that operation at the street door. When he entered the room the sternness of his countenance was only the expression of the moment, for so soon as the exclamation, "My dearest father" met his ear, the thoughtful frown disappeared to give place to a kind warm smile, and his face broke into the perfect beauty of a father's love.

"My darling Ida, I am, I fear, very late, and have kept you waiting," and as he clasped her slight waist with one arm, with the other he parted the delicate silken hair which fell from her temples, and kissed her forehead with tenderness.

It was meet that the stern man should love the fair child, that the oak should sustain the tendril, for although not of singular beauty, of that marked loveliness which men, amid the traffic, the amusement, and the occupation of life, stop to look at, hers was a face that grew upon you as you gazed; there is a physical beauty which strikes you at first sight, which you turn round to admire, and then turn away to forget; for the mind, the soul, is too frequently wanting there. There are other countenances, and Ida's was one of these, in which the first impression affects the mind and the heart; and it is not until after you have pondered on the sweetness of expression, that you remember how soft is the bloom on the cheek; how love-moulded the lip, how blue and gentle the eye. There was nothing striking in Ida as to height or figure, but there was that which at once rendered her remarkable—for, alas, it is too rare—a look of such confiding innocence, that the worst nature must have become purified as it gazed upon her countenance, a holiness of thought which might be read in the clear pale brow, and the delicate flush that mantled her cheek.

"Bring dinner," said Mr. Leslie to the servant, who had followed him into the room; but the usual harsh stern tone was now softened by affection, and while the dinner was preparing, the father took the daughter on his knee, and the bright tresses of her fair head fell over his iron-grey temples. Youth and Age blending together; the Past and the Future embracing each other.

It was evident, even to Ida's unpractised eye, that her father had a secret on his mind; he was quite oppressed with it; it was choaking in his throat; but it was equally evident

that, for the moment, he had determined not to touch upon the subject that was nearest to his heart. Once or twice he hemmed, as if about to say something, but so soon as Ida looked up to his face he spoke on some indifferent subject; and yet a conscious satisfaction glowed on his countenance, as his lips half opened for the intended disclosure, as though he liked to play with his own anxiety to reveal it.

Every now and then he cast a furtive side-glance at the cheek which was reposing against his heart, to read whether she suspected his possession of a secret, but he could see nothing in those features save confiding truth and love. Ida, unused to London, might have been disturbed at her father's protracted absence; but now that he was returned to her, that she was relieved from her depression and loneliness, curiosity possessed a very small fraction of her thoughts; at that moment it was indeed true that ignorance was bliss to her.

The dinner passed almost in silence, for Mr. Leslie was much absorbed in his thoughts, and yet there was a light merry tone in his voice, when he asked his child to drink wine with him, as though the subject of his meditation was not disagreeable to him, and his face beamed with benevolence which might well be termed expansive when he threw himself back in his chair after dinner, and unbuttoned a button of his waistcoat. The dinner finished, he turned his chair towards the fire, desired Ida to draw hers near to him, and filled his glass to the brim. His eye wandered round the room, and at last rested on a newspaper which was lying on the sofa.

"Have you read the paper to-day, my darling?"

"I took it up for a moment," Ida replied; "and was just commencing one of those long, long articles, which I cannot imagine how people have the patience to write, for I never have the patience to read them through, when, to my astonishment, who do you think was announced? I was so surprised, for I did not think that we knew any one in London."

"And who was it, my dear child?"

"Why, Lord Linton."

"In spite of the effort which Mr. Leslie made to appear calm, a slight flush overspread his countenance, and there was something approaching to a look of triumph in his glance as he repeated the name.

"Lord Linton! did he give any reason for calling, Ida?"

"Yes, papa; he said that he had heard of your arrival in town, that you had been at school together, and he was anxious to renew your acquaintance—indeed, he was so kind, papa, about you. I was astonished at seeing him, and I don't remember one-half that he said, but he talked a great deal about the government, foreign embassies, operas, balls. I am afraid he must have found me very stupid."

"But what did he say about me? Did he mention why I had come to town? or did he ask you the reason of our visit?" asked Mr. Leslie, somewhat impatiently.

"No," replied Ida; "he seemed to take it quite as a matter of course; by-the-by he did say something about an estate. Ah, now I remember, I am quite sure you have some secret you are keeping from me, tell it me;" and she coaxed him so fondly, he was amply repaid for his discretion.

"Precisely as I imagined," muttered Mr. Leslie. "A man has only to become rich for his friends to find him out; I rejoice at the probable cause of Lord Linton's visit, for your sake, my darling Ida, not for my own." And again the grey-haired old man passed his arm round his child's waist, and drew her towards him.

"And now Ida, my love, can your little head guess why I asked you if you had read the Morning Post?"

"Indeed, no, Papa, what can the Morning Post have to do with me, with your secret, or Lord Linton?"

"Everything, my pet," answered Mr. Leslie, "everything; take up the paper and look at the first column."

"There is nothing particular," she said.

"Oh, yes, now I see there is an immense advertisement about the sale of the Marquis of Rochdale's estate. What a description—forests, lakes, broken woodlands, princely possession, feudal castle, baronial rights, mediæval architecture,—what a beautiful place it must be!—This is all that I see, Papa."

As the father listened he placed the glass half emptied on the table; he took the paper from his daughter's hand, turned his chair slightly round, and then drew her from her seat to his knee, and she seemed to comprehend, that something more than a mere secret, a mystery of her future existence, was about to be revealed to her; for she was silent, and did not caress him as she was wont to do at other times, but looked anxiously into his countenance as it were to read the tale that was written there.

"Ida, my own sweet child, come to my arms," said the agitated old man. "I will tell you the secret; all the time of dinner I was longing to disclose it to you; this magnificent place, this Castle Melwood of which you have just been reading so glowing a description, is your own."

"Mine! what do you mean, dearest Papa?"

"I mean precisely what I say," repeated Mr. Leslie, in a somewhat harder tone, for his mercantile and matter-of-fact mind grew impatient if he was not immediately understood. "Yes, Ida, after a life of toil and self-denial, I have been able to realize sufficient to purchase Castle Melwood, and what Lord Linton's visit has to do with the matter is simply this; that even from my little knowledge of the world, I shrewdly suspect that had he not heard some rumour of this purchase, we should not to-day have been honoured by the presence of the cabinet minister, ex-ambassador, ex-governor, grand cross of ever so many orders, and God knows what else!"

"Oh, no, my dearest Papa, you are quite wrong," resumed Ida; for, with all the generous enthusiasm of youth, she thought at the moment less of her new possession than of Lord Linton, who had appeared so kind to her, being attacked, and his motives misinterpreted. "No, I assure you, that is impossible, for he talked so much about you, and with real affection. One can always tell when a person speaks from the heart, don't you think so, Papa?" (poor innocent Ida, thinking she could judge Lord Linton's character from his manner.) "Don't say anything against Lord Linton, for I was quite delighted with him, so different to all the people I have been accustomed to meet at Liverpool. I can assure you that he amused me excessively."

"You are an enthusiastic little pet," said Mr. Leslie, pressing Ida still closer to him; "but what do you think of my new purchase?"

"I am so taken by surprise," replied Ida, "that I scarcely know what to think about it, I cannot collect my mind at all. Imagine Castle Melwood, so grand and magnificent, which belonged to the Marquis of Rochdale, now being ours! It will take me some time to accustom myself to the change of position; and then are you not afraid, Papa, that the people in the neighbourhood, who have been accustomed to such a great family as Lord Rochdale's, will think it odd?—will——"

"I know what you are about to say, Ida,"

interrupted Mr. Leslie, impatiently, for nothing is more annoying than to find our own lurking doubts and mistrusts confirmed by another; "you are about to suggest the possibility of our not being received with cordiality by the neighbourhood; I suspected as much. Now let me set your mind at rest on this point, and I do not wish to have the subject alluded to again; what I have attained to has been the result of untiring industry, and, let me also add, of honourable dealing." He raised his head in conscious pride as he continued; "yes, Ida, I have never been guilty of one act, never entertained one thought, which I should scruple to avow; I know not what my Lord Rochdale, Lord Linton, or Lord anybody's opinions of me may be, but of this I am sure, they shall not despise a man who has risen from the people, yes, from that people to whose energy, to whose probity, to whose gallantry, we owe the greatness this country has attained to; the people, not a sublime abstraction, as some have called them, but a people by whose bone and sinew our empire is preserved."

And his cheek glowed, and his nostrils dilated, and his whole presence was that of a man impressed with a great conviction.

But still the severity of his voice when he first commenced proved that his mind was not quite at rest upon that point.

Ida was silent, for she feared that she had unintentionally offended him, and the long lash fell over the blue downcast eye, as though she dreaded to meet his anger.

It was but momentary. Mr. Leslie was proud of his own eloquence, and entirely convinced by his own warmth; besides he was too full of his new acquisition to entertain long any other feeling but that of enjoyment; he took a roll of papers from his pocket, which contained plans of the different parts of the castle, admirably executed, and each fresh exclamation of delight from Ida added to his happiness.

"It is very late, my darling," he said at last; "you will have time enough during the next few days to think over the alterations we are to make, and the flower-gardens which are to be laid out. We must remain in town for a week; and all my time will be occupied in concluding my arrangements. They would have taken much longer, but this purchase has been discussed for some time past, although it was only definitively concluded to-day; and now you must go to bed, my child. Bless me! it is twelve o'clock!" he continued,

starting from his seat; "we shall go on gossiping all night. God bless you, Ida, my love! Sleep well, and be happy!"

She was happy, as she murmured, in return, a blessing on her father.

Their rooms were next door to each other; the blue spring and the dusky autumn of life were soon fast asleep under the same roof; the soft-featured child-like simplicity of earliest youth, and the stern, wrinkled, material experience of the world's wrestler; the balmy breath of innocence, and the hoarse slumber of the heavy sleeper; there they lay, and yet, different as they were, to each there was the same kind thought, the same ties of heart and affection; the clear bright waters of hope flowed through the rugged and time-worn channels, and through the soft and pleasant meads. She was dreaming of the happiness in store for her father; he of the blessings which Providence would shower on his child. Those hearts, divided by darkness and space, were united in Love.

CHAPTER II.

THE week passed most rapidly. Mr. Leslie was occupied nearly the whole day in making those numerous arrangements which were the necessary consequence of such a purchase. He was now rarely out of temper; his whole mind was wrapt up in his new acquisition, and in his desire to make Ida happy. The gentle and happy girl implored him not to take so much trouble about her; but all her entreaties were unavailing, his generosity was unbounded. Every day he returned with fresh purchases, which he assured her were indispensable to her new position; a looker-on might have been amused at his frequently misplaced efforts to please, but could not, at the same time, fail to love such unselfishness.

If avarice grows with what it feeds on, so does generosity. Perhaps of all enjoyments in life, there is none like that of giving; and if those who hug themselves on their accumulations, who glory in the consciousness of having so much store of wealth amassed for their own selfish objects, whose hearts are possessed with projects of future aggrandizement, whose conversation is perpetually of balances, of dividends, and speculations — could but know the pleasure of giving from their abundance, they would be able to appreciate the still greater happiness of those who give from their poverty. Mr. Leslie, although educated in the hard-featured school of poli-

tical economy, had never embraced its cold callous doctrines; that which had preserved his freshness and kindness of heart was his love for his child; it was this attraction which had animated all his exertions, and he thought that he only cared for wealth in order to promote her happiness.

As for Ida herself, she was fully interested in all those imaginations with which the heart of a young girl placed in such a situation is naturally filled; she amused herself with copying the drawings of Castle Melwood, and designing new plans; she drove in the park with a cousin of her father's who resided in the vicinity of the Regent's Park, and owned a very cumbersome vulgarly emblazoned carriage, drawn by two heavy, long-tailed, underbred horses, loaded with richly embossed harness. Here she gazed with wonder on the pomp, parade, and refinement of the great city, and remarked everything, without noticing the attention which she herself attracted, and little imagining that people were smiling at the contrast which her fair, fresh, graceful features presented to the good-natured, vulgar, ruddy, strongly-developed, countenance of her magnificent cicerone.

She was ignorant of her own beauty—vanity had not taken root in her heart; it was happiness enough for her to watch the dazzling crowd, the rapid movement, the ever-varying forms of the world's kaleidoscope; she did not care much for her change of position, although Lord Linton, who was a man of fifty, and of ambition vast as his own ruined estates, in the constant visits which he paid to Sackville Street, endeavoured to impress it upon her mind; while he was describing the magnificence of the halls and galleries, the varied beauties of the wild and broken chace which extended for miles round Castle Melwood, she was thinking of the pony which Mr. Leslie had purchased for her, with what glee she would gallop over fern and brake, and how enjoyable the wide stillness of the extensive park would be after the confinement of Liverpool.

Do what you would, it would have been very difficult to spoil Ida. There are some people, in whose hearts all thoughts work for good, who purify every thing which runs through their minds, and who have only so much of human weakness, ambitions, and vanities, that they are charitable towards those in whom these feelings are more developed, and that they learn to love them, even in their errors.

Of Mr. Leslie it is not necessary to say much; his history may be imagined from what has preceded; it was one of those histories so honourable to our country, to our national institutions, as well as to the individual; of something less than obscure parents, by indefatigable toil, by strict and honourable dealing, he had accumulated, through a long course of patient industry, something more than a million sterling—he was essentially the man of the people.

It may be guessed, from the few features of his character that we have already described, that he was plain-spoken, single-hearted, generous, abounding in charity, but somewhat vain, and at times tyrannical; easily irritated, but soon appeased, impatient of contradiction, a mixture of good and evil, which might be considered almost strange, if all characters were not composed of good and evil, and if every single quality of human nature had not its opposite, into which it frequently merges, and which leads men into such apparent inconsistencies. We too well know that every single virtue has its corresponding vice running parallel with it, and disputing every inch of the way—generosity and prodigality—the love of justice, the anxiety for revenge—the spirit of liberty, the dogmas of license—laudable ambition, and the anxiety to drag down others to our own level—the boldness of truth, the presumption of ignorance—the love of the virtuous, and selfish censoriousness—the charity that suffers all things, and the weakness that betrays us into the follies we censure in others. Who can venture to say where the light meets the darkness, and under which head his own peculiar qualities should be classed? So if Mr. Leslie was full of apparent contradictions, he was like many other people; but in no feature of his character was this contradiction more apparent than in the rough-and-ready accent with which he was wont to address most people, and the gentle inflection of his voice when he spoke to Ida. Up to fifty-eight his character and disposition had remained much the same; he was now on the eve of changing his whole habits of life, and we shall see whether, after that age, the character alters with circumstances.

Meanwhile, great preparations were making for their reception at Castle Melwood. It is melancholy that it should be so, but thus it ever is; the same trumpet which announces the decease of one sovereign proclaims the advent of another; a new house is built up

from the ruins of an old one. The same day great families decay, and new families arise. The same bells which chime for the new birth toll for the new-made grave.

Castle Melwood was really a very fine possession; it stood at the end of a long range of hills which formed the boundary between two counties, covered with ancestral oaks, which had attained their maturity, but had not yet fallen into decay; from the terraces of the castle itself the eye swept over an immense extent of woodland and pasture, intersected by those pleasant streams, each of which possesses its separate interest, and a store of associations bright as the ripples upon its surface, and fleeting as its bubbles. On one side, at four miles' distance, the sea broke upon the shore, and the white sails might be seen gliding noiselessly and pleasantly along, like the visions of a youthful heart; at the very foot of the castle, the village of Melwood was situated; one of those comfortable, nay, almost luxurious English villages which so astonish foreigners, and even give our own statistical tourists very erroneous notions as to the universal prosperity of our rural population; the cottages were dotted about, not built in formal streets, and each cottage had its plot of ground before it, laid out in tasteful flower-gardens, and its allotment of land at the back.

The estate, which combined not less than forty thousand acres, in a ring fence, had been long neglected; the late possessor had lived half his life in Italy, was an admirable connoisseur in all fine arts, and while talking of economy had managed to ruin himself by his extravagance, and his ill-selected purchases; to do him full justice, for a long time he laid out as much as he could upon his estate; but a statue or a picture would at any time tempt him. His first intentions were always generous, but his after-thoughts always selfish. But he had this merit; so soon as he was fully persuaded of the fact that he could no longer discharge the obligations of a landed proprietor, he determined to sell the estate; perhaps, to tell the truth, he was not sorry of an excuse for living entirely abroad. Mr. Leslie, who had long been seeking for such an investment, saw the advertisement, and, hearing from a friend that it really was an eligible purchase, lost not a moment in coming to a conclusion. With the rapid energy of a man of decision, he went immediately across the country to see it, was delighted at its appearance; it did not prove quite so good an invest-

ment as he was led to believe, but that did not matter; the latent germ of ambition had taken root in his mind; at any sacrifice he determined to possess the ancient property of the House of Rochdale, but, excited and anxious as he was, no one could detect his feelings through the habitual coldness of his features. He managed entirely to outwit Lord Rochdale's agents, and, after much discussion and affected coyness, he bought the estate a great bargain.

Whoever had the good fortune to possess Castle Melwood was almost a sovereign prince; at any rate, he was monarch of all he surveyed, and that was a good deal of arable and pasture land, with jurisdiction over upwards of twenty parishes.

The only exception to this monopoly was a small estate of about two thousand a-year, situated about a mile from the castle and nearer the sea, which belonged to Mr. Ernest Vane. This estate had been in former days a source of much annoyance to the late Marquis; he would have given any price for it, but, unfortunately, it was priceless, that is, it was strictly entailed. There had always existed a very hostile feeling between the Marquis and the late Mr. Vane, who had died in the preceding year, leaving two children, Ernest, and his sister Algitha. Lord Rochdale's feelings with respect to the former proprietor of this property were precisely those of Haman, when he saw Mordecai sitting at the gate; and it must be owned that the late Mr. Vane's manners were not prepossessing; he interfered in everything, and as he resided constantly on the spot, whereas the Marquis was generally absent, he really did end in usurping the whole authority of the neighbourhood. These were but trifles, but these trifles make up the sum of human existence; give me the trifles of life in my favour, and you shall have the great events.

At last, by untiring energy and attention, Mr. Vane's little Monaco quite eclipsed in influence the neighbouring sovereignty. The elder Mr. Vane was a very mean man, wise as a serpent, and not quite as harmless as a dove; he had never lost an opportunity of benefiting himself or his estate, and when the opportunity was not forthcoming, he created it. If it was a meeting of road trustees, he would vote all the money for his own district. In vain Lord Rochdale's agents squabbled and rebelled, if they became very troublesome, then Mr. Vane invited them to dinner.

In addition to all this, Mr. Vane was an

orator, a county orator; a most terrible infliction to civilized society, a plague beneath which even Pharaoh's heart must have broken. But such a man is the vital principle of country life, and so Mr. Vane presided at all dinners, and got them up on every conceivable occasion; for His Majesty's accession, His Majesty's coronation, His Majesty's birthday. No matter what the event, it was celebrated by a dinner, in order that Mr. Vane might have the fun of presiding. He proposed and seconded candidates at the county town, sat in the carriage of the new-made member at the chairing, cheered with stentorian lungs, and could talk at any length about the rights of the people, Runnymede, and the development of the national mind. But all this imposed wonderfully upon the little community; and then it must be owned, that to the extent of his means he was hospitable; when the hounds met in his neighbourhood, breakfast was always prepared for the whole field; while the old castle looked frowning on the vale, stern, gloomy, historical, and north tower, western tower, eastern tower, round tower, clock tower, were all shut up and desolate, Wimbourne looked gay, sunny, and joyous; it was a small house embowered in flowers and evergreens, with a rippling stream gurgling at the foot of a succession of terraces; Byron prays for

“ A home in some vast wilderness
With some fair spirit for my minister ”

But he would probably have preferred this seclusion, although it had no pretension whatever to the character of wilderness; and assuredly all doubt would have been removed from his mind could he once have caught a glimpse of the fair spirit who ministered there so gracefully and gently.

She was, may be, two years older than Ida, equal in beauty, but of a beauty widely different. If Ida might have been compared to a Claude in her warm, sunny, basking loveliness, Algitha might have been represented by the works of Salvator Rosa, in his boldest touches, his most startling imaginings. She was taller than Ida—altogether more striking. She had a wilful and wayward manner, which could not fail to captivate even those whom at first it might have annoyed; strong and impetuous in the expression of her feelings; sometimes even irritable and excitable; but however foolishly she might act or talk, it was quite impossible not to forgive her immediately. She was so frank in her regrets after

any of her little sallies of impatience, that her very faults endeared her to every one. She had a truly wild gipsy countenance, with long black hair, so long that it was only with great ingenuity and repeated coils it could be at all kept in anything like order. Her face was an oval, with a small rounded dimpling chin, and a ruddy petulant upper lip, which betokened at once defiance and passion; but her brow was so pure, the eye so steady and clear, that it was not possible to mistake the truth of her character.

A child might have read her nature, and almost envied its earnestness and simplicity; but an experienced judge of the heart and countenance would have perceived a danger lurking there, as the mariner, in the gorgeous glorious streaks of a brilliant morning sky, foretells the proximity of peril. It was quite evident that if she ever loved, it would not be with the cold caution of our northern character, but with the passionate earnestness of the warm Italian—with the recklessness of those who care only for the enjoyment of the present hour, and allow the future to take care of itself. Her father, like most fathers, was perfectly ignorant of his child's disposition; he saw her flashing before him with all the brilliancy of youth, calling forth bursts of admiration from the plain-spoken men by whom he was surrounded, and whose admiration was not always expressed with excessive delicacy; he told every one with an oath that he loved her; that meant, that he loved her as he would a favourite horse or hound, as something necessary to his existence, as adding somewhat to his importance, as a medium of indirect flattery towards himself, and an ornament to his house and to his table.

It was not so with her brother Ernest, who was the very opposite to his father in almost every respect; not ill-disposed towards those English sports which give a manliness to the character, teach habits of self-reliance, and which in their indirect effect have no slight and unimportant influence on the stability of our national institutions; he pursued them with pleasure, but with moderation, for his heart was elsewhere. He was, indeed, what some might call a dreamer and a visionary, but what he himself dignified by the name of poet, and he was right, for although the verses which he wrote were not always smooth and harmonious, his was pre-eminently a poetic and impressionable temperament. He had been educated at a private tutor's in the neighbourhood of Stoneyhurst; and the so-

ciety into which he had been thrown so early had left a deep impression on his mind. Whatever the errors of system and opinion prevalent there, they were combined with an earnestness which could not fail to touch a heart instinctively prone to the beautiful and the mysterious. He had reflected very deeply for his age, and this threw a shade of melancholy, a pale cast of thought, over his countenance.

He was at this time very young in years, but old, not in experience of life, but in experience of the mind. Without mixing much in the world, he had an intimate acquaintance with the motives which influence men who are associated in great business, and could have analysed character and unravelled the hidden impulses of actions as well as most of those who had long taken an active part in the bustling drama of life; just as Lord Howe's famous manœuvre on the first of June was invented by a clergyman who had never seen the sea. Misunderstood by his father, unappreciated by his neighbours, all his affections had been turned back on his own heart; and instead of a man of taste and refinement, it is very possible that he might have become a decided misanthrope, had it not been for the society of Algitha, whom he loved with extravagant tenderness, and who in return delighted to hang on his words, and did not flinch from receiving his advice, for, even when adverse to her, it was always expressed with a winning tenderness of manner. He was one of those single-hearted men whom, in the midst of the turmoil and excitement of life, the world cannot stop to appreciate; just as, in the tumult of the battle, the most heroic instances of self-devotion may pass unnoticed. But there is not one of us who at some time or in some manner has not imagined some ideal character, to whom we attribute all those qualities which we most admire and affect, and these qualities Ernest possessed. This is the imagination of greatness, which is common to all, and is the evidence of the Godhead within us; later in life, sad to say, these imaginations, so vague, so indefinite, it is true, but once so glorious and absorbing, are despised and rejected like the playthings of youth, or the ashes of the wood that warmed us. The heart is then covered with the wrecks of broken feelings, as the glittering sands are after a storm hidden by the long brown strips of rugged sea-weed; but the wreck serves to prove that a gallant vessel once floated there, and the sand exists,

although concealed from view. The fair child's dream may never be realized, but it never wholly perishes; it will be recalled in moments of sickness and depression, when the glory of this world is passing away, and a greater is bursting on the view; the pleasant fields and pleasant voices of childhood return to the memory when the frame is purified by suffering and disease; the heart becomes young again as it approaches to heaven. Oh, then, be kind to the young, for the word said to the child is remembered in old age.

Ernest Vane aptly impersonated this idea which so many entertain; but, at the same time, it would be doing him an injustice to delineate him as a hero of romance, that staple commodity of every novel. He was anything but that; he was only what many men are, full of hopes, and affections unemployed; but unemployed affections lead to thought, and thought induces poetry. But Ernest had faults,—a spirit impatient and intolerant of the world's claims and the world's will; a haughty irritability, which not unfrequently broke out at inappropriate moments; a sense of superiority, which too often betrayed itself to others. His countenance, as countenances ever will, caught something from the superiority of mind, that most enviable of all aristocracies. The course of the veins in the temples might be traced through the thin transparent skin; his eyes were blue, clear, and limpid as an Athenian sky; the nostril was thin,—sure indication of purity of blood; the mouth small, melancholy, and full of expression. The whole countenance was one which interested you at once. The people in the whole country round respected him. When he was walking or riding with Algitha, if he had been the Marquis of Rochdale and proprietor of Castle Melwood, he could not have been treated with greater deference; and many did not scruple to express the wish that those estates belonged to him. If they had consulted Ernest, he would have told them that he was quite happy without them.

CHAPTER III.

It was the morning that the new arrivals were expected, and it dawned auspiciously. The castle looked magnificent. All the shutters were removed from the windows; the sun seemed to rejoice at having something new to shine on, for it blazed on the bright sheets of glass in all its glory. Algitha had been idling her whole morning in the garden, and was

now painting in her boudoir, when Ernest entered.

"Well! Have you heard anything of the Leslies, Ernest?" she asked.

"Only that they are certain to arrive this evening, and the poor people are quite mad on the subject. They seem to think that the golden age has returned to earth. I never saw a village so excited. They have been pillaging our garden of all the best flowers, and as for the shrubberies about the castle, there is not a plant left in them. You will never recognise your favourite walks again; the laurels are cut down to the very roots, and they have not taken the trouble to pull the flowers, but actually torn them from their beds. It is so like the multitude, who will always attempt to improve upon nature, and think the flowers look better in triumphal arches and garlands, than in their natural beds. However, it shows a hospitable kind feeling—an anxiety to please."

"An anxiety to please themselves," interrupted Algitha; "for it is not possible to believe that the people care in the least degree for persons whom they have never seen, or for a family with whom they have not the remotest association, and whose name they never heard mentioned until a fortnight since; for my part, I think it shows a mean slavish feeling, and I should hate, if I were coming to a new place, to think that the people were acting such a part."

"No, you would not, Algitha, I will answer for it; and as for their motives, we have no business to discuss them, if their practice tends to the happiness of others. If I were in Mr. Leslie's place, I should feel very uncomfortable arriving at a new estate to succeed an old family, and to commence a fresh circle of ideas and acquaintances, and acquaintances, too, who have all the associations with the old family, and are always drawing unfavourable comparisons; for this must more especially be the case when the new proprietor has not moved in the same station of society as the person he succeeds; and also owes his position to his own exertions instead of inheriting it, for say what you will, be assured, that in this country there is a great inherent love, I will not say for old family and illustration, for that seems to me to have gone out of fashion sadly, but an inherent love of rank and its possessors. I think that, under the circumstances, Algitha, we should do all in our power to bid the new arrivals welcome."

"You are quite right, Ernest, of course," replied Algitha; "but I cannot help regretting that we have to go through all the forms of society with people whom I do not in the least care about, and who only interest me as being the owners of the castle. If it were Lord Rochdale coming down, that would be a different thing altogether; there is something owing to his family, which these people by the by seem to forget. We live so near the castle, that we shall be forced to meet the Leslies as often as they choose to ask us; and I always observe it is never the real old families, but always the parvenus, who give themselves airs. There really is no one else for them to ask except ourselves. To be sure they may invite the Patons, but then I am certain that no Christian family will ever receive them a second time, when once they have heard that melancholy instrument which Mr. Paton never fails to carry about in his pocket, and which he calls a flute; and then Mrs. Paton's voice! They really are only bearable in winter, when they both have colds, and neither have any breath to expend on music. Then there are the Caulfields; but they live fourteen miles off, and are such a fearfully united family; three red-haired sisters, who never will accept an invitation unless they are all invited together; wear each other's hair in lockets, sing together, and always out of tune; dress alike; blue sashes, with waists up to their arms. What an infliction! Then there is, let me think,"—for she saw that Ernest, in spite of his efforts to keep his countenance, could not avoid laughing. "And there is Lady Roshville, who wears those hideous turbans, and gowns furbelowed up to the waist; and waddles along to her carriage with a footman at each arm. Oh, what a set! I am sure, Ernest, that if these people bore me, from what you tell me you hear of Miss Leslie, they will drive her to despair."

"You are very censorious to-day, Algitha," said Ernest, laughing.

"I don't know whether I am censorious, but I am very idle, and as anxious as any of the children to see the new family arrive, Ernest. I wish to admire the triumphal arches, for which our garden has been sacrificed."

So they strolled down the main road, which was dignified by the name of street. They heard the band practising in a neighbouring barn, and marvelled at the huge parallelograms which the children denominated arches. New sand was laid on the road to the castle; the charity-school children were decked out

for the occasion—those perennial frontispieces to all country festivities—the vignettes of human nature; and, above all, there was the steward, marshalling his tenant force, and assuming the most important airs. In short, that vague hope of a good time coming; that hope which is the last blessing man clings to; which breathes comfort to the seaman, when his vessel has struck the hidden shoal; which calls up visions of love and home to the lonely sentinel on his duty; which even trifles with the gamester, and with the deserted and abandoned—that vague and undefined hope of the future gave an air of enjoyment to the whole scene.

It was late, and the enthusiasm of the villagers was beginning to wear itself out, when a carriage was seen descending the hill. Immediately the huge ensign floated from the flag-tower of the castle; the band prepared their instruments for a dreadful salutation, the steward and his subordinates galloped backwards and forwards, as though the fate of the nation depended on their equestrian exertions. Not that there was anything whatever to do, but every one felt it necessary to do something. Ernest and Algitha stood by smiling, but not unkindly, at the ill-directed energies of the mob, who, like the Israelites of old, will never be free.

The carriage whirled round the corner rapidly, as carriages do whirl when the post-boys are duly impressed with the importance of their freight, with a wheel over and a jerk which tries the material of the best London workmanship, as well as the principle of the centrifugal force. It was at that moment that Ernest caught a glimpse of the countenance, which he felt was the first that ever realized his poetic imaginings; and truly, if beautiful at any time, it was doubly so now, under the excitement of the moment. Ida's head was bent forward, absorbed in the novelty, and to her unpractised eyes, the magnificence of the scene; the germs of a new life, new ambitions, new hopes, new associations, were budding in her heart, and as she gained the spot where Ernest was standing, and caught his glance when he bowed respectfully to her, a deeper glow suffused her cheeks. She turned quickly round to her father, who had taken her hand in his own, "Did you see that beautiful girl, papa, and the gentleman that was with her; who could it be?"

"Some village apothecary, I dare say," he replied quickly, for his mind was absorbed in his own greatness.

For the moment he had forgotten his origin.

As soon as we accustom ourselves to any change in life, the force of volition is so great, it is far from being an uncommon occurrence for a man to acquire, with a change of position, those particular qualities which are peculiar to the new condition. Place a man in a responsible situation, in a place of authority, and it is remarkable how soon the practice of command will become habitual to him. If the world very commonly estimates us by the value we set on ourselves, we, on the other hand, are equally prepared to bestow an undue value on the opinion of the world. Mr. Leslie acquired confidence in himself and his position, because he felt that the people around were prepared to recognise it; when he heard the cheers, and passed under the triumphal arches, he felt an exaltation which he would scarcely have admitted possible even a few hours previously, and when the people crowded round the carriage with their adulatory addresses, that pride, the greatest of which a man is susceptible, broke forth in every lineament of him who had risen from that same people, and now stood above them as their lord and master.

CHAPTER IV.

M. GUIZOT, whose least sentence is in general a theme on which the lightest heart may moralize, who possesses the very admirable faculty of conveying a great truth in a few words, and of expressing mere ideas, common to many people, but which so few have the power of framing into sentences, has given us matter for deep reflection in the following passage:—"On contemple avec anxiété les agitations et les chances extérieures de la vie humaine; que serait-ce si on assistait aux agitations, aux chances intérieures de l'âme humaine?"

In the practical business of life the least detail that affects the great end which every man has in view is ably balanced, and long considered; arrangements must be made, the whole plan of life mapped out, and if one of these arrangements fail, it is considered a grievance, and is matter of serious regret; but of the heart and its varied impressions, its quick sensibilities, its emotions, its progress, how few take them into account or study their causes and effects. The chances to which the human mind is subject rarely enter into the scheme of any man's contemplations, or form a chapter in his anxieties. When Mr. Leslie purchased this great castle,

he really was not influenced by any vain-glorious or purse-proud feeling; he fully believed that his only object was to place his daughter in a situation she would adorn, and worthy of those qualities which he knew she possessed; he thought he was acting under the influence of kind and generous motives, whereas he was at heart an ambitious man; not that he despised his origin,—we have seen that in one sense he was rather proud of it; he would have been the very last man to despise or neglect the friend of his youth and adversity, but very early in life his mind entertained the hope of becoming one day the owner of some magnificent estate. He had steadily kept that object in view, never allowing himself to be drawn aside for one moment by any passions, distractions, or extravagances; to die a great proprietor was the goal he ran for; the attainment of this object was to be the test of his ability.

In this he resembled Warren Hastings, who, as Mr. Macaulay says in his admirable review of his life, “On one bright summer day when a boy, lying on the bank of the rivulet which flows through the domain of his house to join the Isis, there, at three score and ten years later, he told the tale, bore in his mind a scheme which, through all the changes of his eventful career, he never abandoned; he would recover the estate which belonged to his father—he would be Hastings, of Daylesford.”

Soon after he had launched into business, Mr. Leslie had an engagement with one of the great proprietors who live in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, Sir William Slaney. In this mansion the youth, who was there rather by sufferance than as an inherent part of the society, was struck by the kind and generous hospitality which he witnessed, and by the considerate courtesy of his host. At the table he heard a great political question discussed by two of the leading statesmen of the day; the subject was the relative importance of the landed and commercial interests. “Commerce,” said one of those eminent men, “is assuming, and must continue to assume, every day an ever increasing importance; the progress of civilization evidently tends in that direction; it is but a just return for the immense services which commerce has formerly rendered to civilization. The commercial and landed interests are too nearly allied for us to discuss their relative importance, for commerce was the foundation of landed property. Remem-

ber it was commerce that taught Europe to shake off the barbarism of the middle ages; the annual caravans imported the first seeds of knowledge and politeness into the cities and camps of the desert. Letters and commerce are twin sisters; the mightiest remains of antiquity are those of the great commercial cities. Fallen Tyre, ruined Carthage, mouldering Venice, bear their silent testimony to the genius of commerce.”

As he spoke, those that listened felt themselves convinced by the eloquence of the voice and the earnestness of the manner, for eloquence is the child of feeling, and the mother of conviction. The guests rose from table, and by most of them the words that they had heard were soon forgotten. Some went to the glorious bounding chase, others to the well-stocked preserves, a few to the choice and admirably selected library. None thought of the conversation of the morning save this young man; but he went forth alone and solitary, and sat himself down on a rising eminence that overlooked the great commercial capital of the world—a city which a century and half since was a mere village, but whose customs now exceed in amount the revenue of the whole nation in the reign of James II. The young man sat absorbed in his thoughts; the distance between himself and the busy crowd was too great for him to hear its noise and its murmurs. The sound of the anvil in the vast workshop did not reach him, but the evidences of its greatness, of its wondrous prosperity, floated before him silent and beautiful; for far and wide on the Mersey the white sails dipped, filled and rose on the swelling surface of the waters, purpled in the extreme distance. From the same harbour they plumed their flight to distant lands, literally, not figuratively, wide as the poles asunder, to the bright Azores, to the Frozen Arctic, to the Spice Islands of the East, to the new world of the West, and yet their destiny, their mission was the same; it was written in one word, and in golden letters—It was Commerce!

Commerce;—and how much did that one word comprise! How vast the theme—how infinite the conception! It comprised patient industry, undeviating honour—a courage that braved the fearful Alacranes, the pulsations of the vast Atlantic, the treacherous current of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the roar of the monsoon. Science, with her magnetic wand, had been worshipped, and not in vain; and the same bark that bore the fortunes of the crafts-

man and the artisan carried the simple-minded minister of God on his mission of Christianity. Moreover, and almost, as it were, at the young man's feet, stretched out the long avenues of the vast palaces of our merchant princes; a thousand chimneys rose before him, not like the columns of a ruined Rome, monuments of the Past, of a greatness that had been and was no more, but the lofty proclaimers of a magnificent Present; and then, when he looked nearer, immediately around him was the verdant undulating Park, with glittering silvery threads of water flowing through its tranquil expanse; on one side the extensive meads bounded the horizon; on the other, a vast forest of ancient oaks stretched down to the sea.

"All this," thought he, "a great master mind, a statesman pre-eminent in ability, of singular eloquence, and formerly a great pro-consul, tells me has sprung from that commerce, in the vast chain of which I form a humble link. This noble Catholic house, older than the oak on whose gnarled root I am sitting, may too, at one time, if this theory be correct, have owed its greatness to that same commerce; and how shall I refuse to attach faith to an opinion to the truth of which all nature bears testimony, and which glorifies my daily and hourly occupation? This very oak," and he cast his eyes above at the gigantic branches that overshadowed him,— "this very oak, which is now the glory of the demesne, may one day form the ribs of the argosy which shall bear my freight; and this acorn, which so aptly represents my own condition, so small, so insignificant at present, but perhaps possessing the germs of future strength and greatness, may some time, if properly nurtured and cultivated, become a parent stem. Yes, I too may be powerful and found a house, and future generations may look back to me, as the possessor of this proud inheritance looks back to his unblemished ancestry."

And the young man, the almost boy, bowed his head in his hands; the clouds were blown across the blue sky, but he saw not the shadows; and the hound and the rider bounded through the copse below him, but he heard not the huntsman or the horn; for ambition had taken root in his mind, and grew there apace. Hours elapsed in contemplation—not without its charm; and hopes, bright as flowers that blossom near fountains, sprang up in his heart, and he believed it was virtuous to wish to be great. When he rose

from his seat, the shades of evening were falling rapidly around him, but in his imagination he saw a brighter day dawning. "Yes," he exclaimed, and now not inwardly, but aloud,— "I will be great; I feel the impulse, and will follow it; I hear the voice, and will obey it."

And they met again that day at the luxurious banquet; and the guests spoke of the famous run,—of the admirable sport in the preserves,—of the topics of the day. He alone was silent, and they thought him sad. They had changed in nothing, they were the same noble-minded, honourable, generous English gentlemen, but they could not read the mind of that boy, they could not enter into the imagination of the young and sanguine, and understand the reverie of the ardent and hopeful; for they had all that they could desire, nothing to long for, nothing to labour for. Little did they think that this youth was far happier in his world of dreams and active resolution, than they in the greatness of their possessions; little did they imagine that the secret of enjoyment is mental occupation, as the secret of leisure is labour.

He did not express his thoughts (for all resolution to be valuable must be secret, or it wastes itself in words),—and he was wise; for had he told them what he felt, they could not have comprehended it; they never could have understood how one conversation, one day's reflection, could change the whole character of a man, could develop latent faculties and qualities, which but for that conversation might have remained hid and concealed for ever. And yet so it was. The young man who had breakfasted with them that morning, and he who now sat at dinner, were wholly different. A new world had burst upon him, the whole objects of life bore another appearance. And is it strange that a random word should change the whole current of the human heart? We readily grant that the slightest incident may influence a whole life, but will not admit that a word, a thought, a solitary half hour, may affect the destiny of the mind within us.

But in this instance it certainly was so. The youth returned to the counting-house, in heart a new man; his companions perceived a difference in his manner, but ascribed it to some one of those material ills to which nature is prone; they could imagine no other cause; but he never forgot one word of that day's conversation; he felt that he should be great, and the feeling in part accomplished

its own end; in the dock—in the warehouse—on the deck of the merchantman—there he toiled, ambition ever by his side. His strong will overcame all the difficulties thrown in his way; from that hour he had no doubt, no hesitation, no misgivings, his resolution ennobled his career; when the old and well-loved minister died, from whose lips those words had fallen, he went into mourning as though for a friend of his youth; and made a pilgrimage to a midland county to weep over the great man's grave, and place a garland on it; so true is it, that the thoughts of a man live after him, that the great word he has once spoken never dies.

Industry met with its due reward; it is true at moments he was disheartened; when he looked from the windows of the counting-house on that park, where his passion for greatness had first dawned upon him, he would, for a moment, indulge in those reveries, so charming in themselves, but, alas, so fatal to active exertion, without which all reveries are vain; and then, when he was recalled to himself, and saw the musty papers, the voluminous ledgers, the vulgar material by which he was surrounded, his heart sank within him, and he almost doubted whether it was of such elements that greatness was composed; but when he took up the paper, and saw in it the names of those who, like himself, had risen from small beginnings, and were now the world's rulers—he felt himself strengthened, and his heart became renewed.

Some years after he married a young and beautiful woman—his wife died in her first confinement. His object in life remained the same, but now he deceived himself into the belief that he laboured for love of his child, Ida; as she grew in years as in loveliness, it was his happiness to dream of her as the possessor of all that can gratify the taste, and ennoble the character; rough and rude as his speech sometimes was, his sense of refinement was admirable; he used to turn with disgust from the wealthy vulgar plebeian children of his employers, and Ida would scarcely endure them even as playmates; thus he worked on, yet he might have long laboured unsuccessfully in his pursuit of wealth, and only attained it in an extreme old age, but for a fortunate accident.

It was the moment when the mania for speculation raged, and his employers embarked in these treacherous ventures with desperate energy. They were under the in-

fluence of a man, like Mr. Leslie, sprung from the people, who rose rapidly to the heights of fortune, and represented his native town in Parliament. So eminent was he, that flattery could scarcely find language sufficiently exuberant to express its homage. Higher and higher still he rose, until some few men shaded their eyes as they gazed, and exclaimed, too high! Before him the proudest lord bowed; to him the ranks of a jealous aristocracy were opened; men in their avarice, crass ignorance, and stolidity, placed their wealth at his disposal. Testimonials and monuments were voted him for having—made their fortunes. They raised Baal on high, and prostrated themselves before the idol. Well might the language of Tacitus have been applied to them, "*At Romæ ruere in servitum consules, patres, eques, quanto quis illustrior tanto magis festinans;*" great ladies, merchants, princes, were not behind-hand in the race of adulation, and pre-eminent among them all were Mr. Leslie's employers. At the very moment that they fondly imagined that the triumph was achieved, that at last the object of their lives was attained, at that instant the bubble burst, and that firm, which was the type of strength, and eminent for its integrity, became ruined and bankrupt.

Then was the cry raised against those who had deluded the public, by the public who had deluded themselves; the directors of some of the schemes were not treated much better than Secretary Cragges, Aislachie, and Sunderland, in the days of the South Sea bubble; those who had been the first to "share the triumph, and partake the gale" of their good fortune, were now the first to leave them to battle with the storm; the smallest error was magnified by the indignant public into a capital crime, who never thought fit to ask themselves the question whether, if they had continued in the same career of fortune and prosperity, they would have been equally censorious; suddenly, one of those fits of epidemic morality, so common in England, raged like a fever. Those who had most implicated themselves in these transactions shouted the loudest for a victim—and they found one in the man whom we have described.

Mr. Leslie, with admirable caution, had never entered into any of these speculations; at the time that the firm, in which he was then senior clerk, broke, he was in possession of a small sum of ready money, and by bidding

his time, and taking advantage of circumstances, he managed to purchase the greater part of the business; so the man grew into the greatness that the boy had dreamt of, although the fulfilment had not, it is true, that charm which imagination and distance had lent to it. When was imagination ever realised, for

“Every touch that woes its stay,
Has blushed its brightest hue away.”

But he achieved success; no man was more honoured on Exchange; for none were there more anxious enquiries whenever he was absent from a slight indisposition; he occupied the place which the ruined speculator had left vacant; but he did not seek for adulation, and he prided himself that his earnings were comparatively slow and certain, and that he never embarked in a speculation of a doubtful character. When Castle Melwood first appeared in the market, Mr. Leslie had not quite sufficient to complete the purchase, and his power of doing so depended on the arrival of three ships then due from the Philippines; with anxious sleepless nights he awaited them, and at last, one morning, he saw the proud lofty sails of a ship of heavy burden, and that vessel bore his colours; he rushed to the quay, jumped into a boat, clambered up the ship's sides, and trod the deck like a conqueror in his triumph, and conquest indeed it was—for he had conquered—his passions; the natural indolence, to which all men are prone, his appetites, the vanities of his youth; and now he stood there rewarded, the monarch of that peopled deck; within two days the remaining vessels arrived, laden with the riches of the East, and a week after, the negotiations for Castle Melwood commenced, with what result we are already acquainted.

Mr. Leslie possessed one merit to which we have not alluded, but without mentioning which this notice of his life would be indeed imperfect. The more rapid growth of his fortune was retarded by his benevolence. It was not alone at Liverpool that he practised this great virtue, but to Manchester, and Birmingham, and Bolton, that his charities extended. If all men acted in the spirit of Mr. Leslie, there would not be the same outcry against the manufacturers. We should not have to complain that wherever the money-system takes root, there the people are too frequently plunged into unutterable misery. We should not have so frequently to lament

that the growth of wealth is associated with the growth of disease, of poverty, and ignorance; and Southey would not have raised his voice to curse in undying language the foundations of manufacturing cities, as vast emporiums of vice and misery.

It is not the factories that are in themselves pernicious, for they represent the industry of the country, and all industry is ennobling. It is not the mere circumstance of men toiling at the loom instead of guiding the plough that necessarily produces evil, but it is that the minds that direct these vast fabrics think more of gold and less of the people who produce it; they do not, it is true, enunciate the damnable doctrine that capital is to be more highly cared for than the souls of men; but too many of the master manufacturers practically regard the human sinews as a mere portion of that vast machine which produces their wealth and greatness, little heeding that it is at the same time producing a hideous mass of wretchedness and depravity. But, above all, *nos nos dico aperte desumus*. If the legislature had performed its duty from the first, we should not have had to lament that the splendid structure of our manufacturing greatness is erected in a foul atmosphere, and fanned with the breath of corruption. We should not have to speak of children, hump-backed, crooked, deformed, of pale and earthy complexions, whose hearts are a perfect graveyard of sin and decay. We should not have to speak of abominable dens, which defy all description, where the mother alone remains to brave its horrors for her children's sake; of cellars from which human shadows, ghastly skeletons, called indeed by the endearing names of fathers and brothers, but bearing scarcely the semblance of men, emerge, to seek some consolation in the neighbouring pot-house; where, if there be a church, the smallest pittance is bestowed on the house of God,—so it stands, bleak, cold, inhospitable, like the hearts that reared it; but where close to it rises the gin-palace embellished by every art, to render it worthy of the name. We should not be called upon to assert that there are in this country children who have never heard of the name of God, of whom it has been said, in touching language, that the day arrives an hour earlier than to other children, and the night an hour later; who die from premature old age, ruined alike physically and mentally; premature in all things, even in loathsome depravity, in which they obtain an infantine maturity.

This is no exaggeration of the state of our population in many of our manufacturing towns ; but, we repeat, it is not the task that is in fault, it is the task-master. There are, thank God, some rare instances of manufacturing communities, where the master and his servants are associated together by the ties of love as well as of interest. There are men who, like Mr. Leslie, devote their energies and their purses for the benefit of their dependents ; who, while they are storing up wealth, are garnering up a still more valuable and abundant harvest of grateful feelings ; who erect the church near the workshops, and provide for the human family, in all its dignity and requirements ; who are living testimonies that the pursuit of fortune is not incompatible with the pursuit of great and benevolent objects ; that a man may obtain the triumphs of wealth without going to his grave unwept, save by the tears of joy, and unsung, save by the pæans of the broken-hearted and the destitute.

It was a proud moment for Mr. Leslie when he stood on the terrace that first night after Ida had retired to rest ; he now felt that, come what might, he was lord of that vast domain. It could not be said that he had done nothing in his generation. The ancient possessions of the house of Rochdale belonged to him, the man of the people. Their title-deeds were now his ; he was the living testimony to the majesty of commerce ; the man whose name would go down to posterity as the founder of a new house. He gazed upon the dark masses of wood, slightly shadowed forth in the stillness of moonlight ; he listened to the night wind as it whistled languidly around the flag-tower ; and piercing, as it were, the thin veil which curtained the distance, he pictured the home of his youth's toil, and compared it with his present repose ; and ever as he pondered over the past, and anticipated the future, feelings to which he was wholly unaccustomed, vague and strange as dreams flitted across his mind ; his warmest wish was satisfied ; he had attained everything ; he was happy to his heart's content. Ah, was it so ?

He looked upwards, and he gazed on the star-spangled sky ; he looked below the terrace, and he saw nature in her repose, where the very leaves were nursed to sleep. He had never watched the stars as he stood in the docks, where the only mysteries brought home to his mind were the mysteries of trade, the mysteries of the ledger and

the counting-house ; the rattle of bales and casks had hitherto pleased him better than the voice of nature and the songs of birds ; but now, as he listened to the waves when they broke upon the shingles, and saw the light of the pale moon streaming over the vale, the sense of the Infinite grew upon him, and he then for the first time felt that the wind that had filled his sails had blown from heaven, and that the star which had guided him in his course was the star of mercy and of love.

CHAPTER V.

SOME days elapsed before Mr. Leslie and Ida had exhausted their curiosity ; every part of the castle was visited and re-visited, and that was no easy work. Then the furniture of the principal state-rooms was to be arranged, and for this purpose Morant came from town, and gave the benefit of his admirable taste. Libraries, boudoirs, galleries, everything had to be furnished anew. Ida was never tired of admiring the prospect from the drawing-room window, for she loved nature with the freshness of a child. Mr. Leslie often surprised her in some enthusiastic burst of admiration. He would then join in her expressions of delight ; but they were not, it must be owned, quite so pure and simple, for he seldom failed to conclude with the reflection, that it had all been purchased by his own industry.

It was a pile of which, indeed, the oldest Norman family might have been proud ; as the last evidently was, to judge by the various escutcheons emblazoned round the roof of the banqueting-hall, where the royal arms of France and England were quartered with those of the House of Rochdale. There was everything to denote that the former owners belonged to an ancient and princely race. The massive entrance gates were crowned with crests, and the haughty motto "Sumus." Upon the peristyles and round the arches the garter was engraved. The outer hall was an armoury, where corslets, helmets, coats-of-mail, told many tales of Palestine and France. In the inner hall were statues of knights in armour, and around them the painted glass cast a rich and varied light. There were stately galleries, where still hung against the walls the portraits of the ancestors of the old family, renowned in the annals of chivalry. The history of that great house might be read in those pictures. The warrior of the crusade, with the red cross on his shoulder, one hand resting on the Bible, and

with the other grasping the hilt of his sword, in the act of drawing it for the Mother Church; a painting that could not, indeed, boast of the least perspective in the drawing, but, withal, appealing to the imagination, and recalling the past. Then there was the lady wife, in a dress plain and homely as her features, but kneeling at an altar, around which were supposed to be grouped several children, all in the same simple costume, with their little hands joined in prayer; a picture worthy of the knight who died for the cross.

Then came the hard features of a cavalier, who had been the friend of old John of Gaunt—a fact which was celebrated in a few dog-grel lines in the corner of the picture. He was dressed in a steel inlaid corslet and curious chain armour, and looked every inch a knight. Nor was the courtier of the age of the first gentleman in Europe, the first Charles, wanting. He had fallen at Naseby, “where none died that day with greater glory, yet many died, and there was much glory;” for in the House of Rochdale loyalty was a religion; to its members the great Stuart had ever been the sainted martyr king. The members of that family had not imbibed those lessons of wretched philosophy which would degrade the sovereign into a chief magistrate, and would strip him of all that mysterious divinity which dignifies the act of submission, while it consecrates the first principle of all government. Later still the pencil of Lely and the bright colours of Kneller had transmitted to canvass the charms of those high-born illustrious dames, whose beauty had conveyed so great lustre to the court of Charles the Second, and to possess whose love a monarch might well consent to sacrifice a throne.

Then ranged, in due order, were the laced and decorated coats introduced by the House of Hanover, worn by gentlemen with manners as starched as their neckcloths, and backs as straight as their swords. The series was carried down to the present time; for Reynolds and Gainsborough, Lawrence and Grant, lent their aid to immortalise various branches of the family renowned in the senate and the field, in whose pictures the genius of art seems to have been inspired by the objects which they touched.

Ida passed all her mornings in these galleries, imagining the castle in those glorious days when it was inhabited by the living representatives of these pictures, when the knight and the lady sat at the head of the

board, and the retainers below the salt; when there were warders on the tower, and a portcullis was of some use. After the castle, from its topmost turret to its lowest cellar, had been ten times ransacked, the wide chase, the well-ordered farm, the chestnut rides had to be explored. Mr. Leslie joined heartily in all his daughter's amusements; if ever a feeling of constraint, the painful sense of a false position, crossed his mind, it soon passed away, for each day he received fresh food for his vanity. Every one seemed to rejoice in doing him honour, and welcoming him into the country. As for Ida, from the first moment, the villagers delighted in her. They were instantly won by the sweetness of her voice, her gentle smile, her winning acknowledgments; it was a great pleasure to her to enter the cottages of the poor, and listen to the tales of their sorrows and their joys. She had been accustomed to do this in her own vicinity at Liverpool, and she was not likely to lose the habit at Castle Melwood, where the people were so immediately dependent upon her.

The country air did everything for the fair child; it seemed to brighten her heart, and to throw a glow, not only over the cheek, but over the mind. People who are lords of themselves, and have nothing to detain them at home, have little notion how much the health is promoted by change, and how soon the young wither from the mere fact of remaining in the same spot, when poverty, or any other cause, prevents them moving about the world. Ida doated upon her father; there was something very touching and graceful in the affection with which she greeted him whenever they had been separated by a temporary absence; it was only to be equalled by the depth of feeling which the old man showed in return.

There is no love sweeter and holier than that of a father for a daughter—none in which confidence grows up more luxuriantly. Mr. Leslie had never chilled Ida's affections, never checked her joyous spirits; the consequence was, that her heart was centred in him, and he was now reaping the reward of all his self-denial and anxiety.

It so happened that they had been some ten days at the castle before, in their daily rides, they passed by Wimbourne.

It was a beautiful evening, the air light and transparent as a bridal veil. The morning had been warmer than usual at that season of the year; it was the 1st of May. Ida noted the day in her heart; and what is there, after

a warm morning, more delicious than to ride slowly through some of those green lanes which are the distinction and the glory of our land, to mark the showers of light falling on copse and hill-side, or gushing forth from the sun's setting glory in one unbroken flow, as from a golden fountain, on the bright windows and the burnished house-tops?

A love of nature is the love of all that is most beautiful, and the love of the most beautiful is the love of all that is holiest. Ida was a true lover of nature.

At a turning of the road, the grounds of Wimbourne, with its low and picturesque cottage, burst upon them. They had passed that road on their arrival, without having been particularly struck with the beauty of the spot, for, when the mind is occupied, outward objects lose their signification.

"What a lovely place, papa!" she said.

"By-the-by, Ida," exclaimed Mr. Leslie, starting in his saddle, "how negligent of me! I have been ten days here, and I have never called on Mr. Vane. He has a moderate estate," he continued, with something of bitterness in his manner; "*I*" (and he laid a great stress upon the monosyllable, and spoke it out like a real landed proprietor, who dated from the Conquest)—"I surround him on every side. It is rather a disadvantage to the estate of Melwood not possessing Wimbourne; but it cannot be helped; we will call there now, Ida, and ask them to the castle for to-morrow."

"Yes, that will be very agreeable, papa," replied Ida. "I am sure they must be worth making friends with; all the cottagers speak of them in such kind terms. Shall we canter on, papa?" They had passed through the lodge-gate and were riding on the turf.

The well-shaped pony, which she had christened Rainbow, arched its neck, shook its long shaggy mane, and was about to caracole its acquiescence in the proposition, when they saw Algitha and her brother walking slowly down one of the back avenues to meet them.

The salutation on the part of Ernest was rather formal; he had all the sensitiveness of the poetic character, and imagined slights where none were intended. It was a great fault, and in the present instance entirely misled his judgment; for Mr. Leslie was very proud to become acquainted with him, and, if he had delayed calling upon him, this delay arose from the most excusable negligence.

Ernest, however, accepted the invitation,

and Ida sprang from her pony, gave it to the groom, and walked on with Algitha.

We will not speak of those sympathies which writers so much delight to dwell on; of affections which are the staple commodity of all melodramas, where we find daughters, who have never seen their fathers, rushing into their arms at the close of the scene, having discovered the relationship by some electric spark. Ida and Algitha did not pledge themselves, like some young ladies, to eternal friendship at their first interview; on the contrary, their conversation was very common-place, for Algitha wished to hear something of that London life which she had never seen; and, to her imagination, Ida's short residence there constituted her quite a London lady. After they had discussed the ordinary topics of the day, they began to arrange plans for riding parties; and gradually Algitha, who had in the first instance been somewhat disposed to regard her new companion with awe, as the great heiress of the county, laughed as loudly as she was wont to do in those sparkling reckless moods, which Ernest sometimes endeavoured to restrain, although in such matters his advice was very little attended to.

Ernest and Mr. Leslie were soon great friends. Ernest's quick apprehension taught him the precise feelings with which Mr. Leslie must have found himself thrown into so novel a situation, and, with the courtesy of a thorough gentleman, expressed by his manner, countenance, and look, that respect which he would not otherwise have thought it necessary to show. Mr. Leslie was secretly greatly pleased at his deferential attitude, and his gratification assumed the shape, as gratified vanity frequently does, among men unaccustomed to society, of most exuberant hospitality.

"I hope, Mr. Vane, that to-morrow's visit will only be the commencement of an intimacy from which I anticipate the greatest pleasure; we are such near neighbours, that we ought to see a good deal of each other; you will find us naturally quite in a state of disorder. The first few days of a new house are always disagreeable."

"Especially in so large and magnificent a place as Castle Melwood," remarked Ernest.

Mr. Leslie turned quickly round; there was something in the tone of voice with which this was said, which he did not quite like; but Ernest's look was so quiet, that he was at once re-assured. How certain is it that, in

the merest trifles, the suspicious temper finds food for it to feed on.

When they parted, Mr. Leslie was delighted with his young friend, and Ida talked of Algitha in the most enthusiastic terms. Mr. Leslie was proud to find, that the man whom, notwithstanding his small rental, he could not avoid appreciating as the representative of a very old and formerly an ennobled house, had received him not only with courtesy, but even with something approaching to deference. Ida was happy to find such a companion as Algitha, full of wild spirits and excitement, which she communicated to every one she came near.

"You scarcely spoke to Miss Vane, papa; but you would, I am sure, have been charmed with her; and yet I ought to hope not," said she, tossing her little head to shake back the mutinous curls which the light wind blew in her face, "for she is quite a contrast to me."

"And what do you think of Mr. Vane, Ida?"

"You know, papa, you were talking to him the whole time; but, from what his sister told me of him, he must be a person to admire. She says he is the most unselfish of all human beings, kind and generous to every one around him. I told you, papa, what they say of him in the village; well, this has all been confirmed by what Miss Vane tells me. Then he writes beautiful poetry; he looks like a poet, does he not, papa?"

"Why, my little Ida, you are becoming as enthusiastic as any poet," and he patted the glowing cheek as it was turning from him; he saw the deepened colour, but understood it not; strange, these moneyed mercantile men, so well skilled in reading in the human countenance all symptoms of rise and fall of prices, the slightest indications of variations in the rates of exchange, know not the signs of the heart's pulses, the tints of the affections; so the hardy mariner, who is ever watching for the least indication of an approaching storm, or a treacherous current, observes not the wondrous beauty of the starry night, hears not the murmur of heaven's love in the spice-scented breeze, marks not the glory of the crested waves as they foam like molten gold in the vessel's wake on the Eastern seas.

Mr. Leslie and his daughter felt happier that evening than they had done on any day since their arrival. All adventitious excitements pall so soon—the habits so quickly

adapt themselves to any change in our lives, that Mr. Leslie in the short space of ten days had become quite accustomed to his new position, and began to feel the loss of his daily occupation. As for Ida, she had missed that first necessity of all young hearts, the necessity of some one to confide in; her father she doated on; but there are slight influences of the heart's finest touches which a woman will never confide except to one of her own sex, or when she murmurs them forth on her knees; and if men would but understand this, and respect the individuality of the woman's soul, there would be more happiness in social life; there would at the same time be much less nonsense talked about overflowing confidences. A woman who has no thought to conceal has none worth concealing, or worth knowing; has no secret feelings enshrined in the holiest of the holiest recesses of her heart, none of those delicate emotions which, like light, surround the whole character, but cannot be weighed or analyzed; has no treasure of the mind worthy of being cherished. There is a life within us which all persons, except the rudest and most uncultivated, must respect; there are prayers which we are told to offer up in secret—oratories into which no footstep except the boldest will intrude.

Thus Ida thought, and looked forward to the society of a friend into whose heart she could pour the history of all her hopes, and who would be prepared to sympathise with her every wish.

CHAPTER VI.

AND Ernest—is it too much to say, that when he retired to his room to read that evening, his interest was in some degree engaged in Ida? Were not the very circumstances of the case such as to lay, in his imagination, the foundations of a romance? How often, in those solitary rides and walks which he used to take, had he not pictured some one fair form, who would arise to interrupt, but not to disturb, the repose of his life! He had often looked up to the huge castle, and marvelled who would next inhabit it. As a boy, he used to wander through the echoing galleries, and weave romantic tales as he gazed on the pictures of the stern warriors and stately dames whom we have described. The courts, grass-grown, and damp with age and neglect, were his favourite resorts when he wished to meditate on the past; the green slopes and fir shades he sought when he

dreamed pleasantly of the future. Latterly, these favourite haunts had been closed against him; first, by the busy meddling men of business, when it was determined to sell the castle; and latterly, by Mr. Leslie's own arrival; now he was to revisit those spots, and the vision which he had conjured up began to be realised to him, and to assume an actual form.

It would have been the same thing if, instead of a being glowing with worth and beauty, Ida had not been pre-eminently distinguished by these qualities. There are certain frames of mind in which a person is predisposed to feel interested in some one—almost in any one; it is a want in the human heart, "*le besoin d'aimer*," which requires to be satisfied; as Madame de Genlis says, "*j'aime, parceque je l'aime; parceque c'est lui, et que c'est moi.*" A natural poet discovers poetry in objects, which to another person would appear absolutely uninteresting; just as a superior artist perceives beauties in a landscape, which is dull to the inexperienced eye. It frequently happens that much of the worth and beauty which we attribute to any object is in our own imagination. It so chanced that in the present instance all Ernest's expectations had been more than fulfilled; but Ida personally had no place in his reverie; his imagination had been almost as much excited, even before seeing her, as now when he leant his head on his hand and wrote some stanzas that night; if he was in love with anything, it was with his own thoughts.

The window was open, and, fatigued with that hardest of all labours, composition, he looked out on the night. In the distance the castle loomed with stern and haughty front; there were but three of the battlements of the loftiest towers distinctly visible against a streak of moonlight. Black masses of cloud buried the rest of the pile in darkness. He pondered on the various scenes through which that castle had passed; he thought of the different faiths which had been preached within its walls; of the nights which had swept over and the mornings which had broken upon it, and to which this night and the next morning were to add another unit. And when he, who in his boldness and hope looked forward to some forty or fifty years of life, had passed away, there would still be the castle, scarcely blacker than it was at present, not even shorn of a battlement.

"Oh mystery of mysteries!" he exclaimed, "for what purpose am I created, if so

soon to perish? Do what I will, I cannot get rid of this startling fact that I am alone; that no one can share in my spirit, or partake my eternity; let me fashion my heart as I will, let me link myself with the past, by wandering and dreaming amid the walls of that old castle, let me bind myself to the present by every tie of love, kindred, or ambition, to the future, by laying the foundations of great monuments, or of the still nobler structure of good works, yet still I am alone; and as the waters of a river, even while you are dipping a cup into it, rush in and fill up the vacant space, so shall my place be filled up before I am scarcely dead. Why then was I created?"

He forgot in that moment, and oh, how often do we all forget it! that there is something still greater than and beyond our own existence—that is, the human family; that our existence is not limited to ourselves; that men are linked to each other by ties that do not require personal intercourse, and that survive them after death; that tradition binds man to man, and generation to generation; that but for this obligation, which no one can shake off, it might indeed be all the same a hundred years hence, as we hear it so often said. But this it is that is the distinctive quality in the career of man.

The next day, early in the afternoon, Ernest and his sister arrived at the castle. The moment that he entered the hall he was struck with the change that a few weeks had effected. He scarcely recognised the place where he used to meditate in perfect solitude; the whole pile had been decorated with all the lavish luxury of modern refinement. Mr. Leslie had apologised for the rough manner in which he should have to receive him. The apology was not only unnecessary, but wholly misplaced. Not even the Marquis of Rochdale himself could have had a more stately troop of servants—a more pompous array of the appurtenances of wealth. At any other time this would have disturbed Ernest, who had a dislike to all show of pretension; but his attention was at that moment entirely absorbed by Mr. Leslie and Ida, who came to the door to greet him and his sister.

Miss Leslie wore a high dress, loose from the shoulders to the waist, which was beautifully small and rounded, according to our accepted notions of the perfection of the female form—in which opinion the ancients materially differed from us. Her pleasure at seeing Algitha gave an additional attraction of animation to her countenance. She held

out her hand to Ernest with a frank and cordial manner, which relieved him from all embarrassment.

Within the short space of time which had elapsed since his arrival at Castle Melwood, Mr. Leslie had caught the proprietorial habit, and lost no time in dragging his guest about into every room, and pointing out all the improvements which had been made in the interior of the castle. He then parcelled out the three next days to visit the different points of view in the park, to settle what trees should be cut down, where fresh plantings ought to be laid out, or paths made. It was agreeable to Mr. Leslie to find some one who he thought would sympathise so entirely with him.

And this Ernest did to perfection. He did not naturally take a very great interest in agricultural matters; but that desire to please, which was the chief feature in his character, enabled him to enter into the feelings of any person with whom he was accidentally thrown. In some people this is an affected habit, easily seen through; in him it was the outpouring of the heart, and for the time he put himself into the state of mind which he expressed. It must be admitted that his power of self-denial was seldom put to so severe a test as it was on the present occasion, for his great desire was to have joined Ida and his sister; and even his patience could scarcely stand Mr. Leslie's very long stories and lectures on political economy, which were received with such invariable approbation on the 'Change at Liverpool, where they were as well known as the clock, that he imagined that every one must be equally interested in their recital.

The dinner-hour came at last. Mr. Leslie wisely sat in a small suite of rooms; but even these were full of those portraits and historical family incidents which were the ornaments of the castle, but were fast becoming a subject of annoyance to Mr. Leslie. He almost regretted having ever purchased them with the place, and would gladly have packed them up, had he had anything to substitute in their place; but, alas! the pedigree of the Leslies furnished no mailed warriors or silken courtiers. He had but two family pictures; the one represented an old and rather unpleasant-looking man, with a tie-wig, straight-cut coat, a very tight and starched white neckcloth, coarse stockings, and Brobdignag shoe-buckles; the other, a prim lady, shuffling out of existence, sallow and shrivelled, with exceeding long ruffles and thick silk dress, which stood out as a defence against the approaches of that

rude world, in defiance of which the thin blue lips were puckered up in virtuous indignation. They were Mr. Leslie's father and mother, people—as he used to say—excellent in their way, and admirable in their generation, but of quite a different, obsolete, age; just as his grandchildren would some day term his age an obsolete one. The strangest thing, in looking at such pictures, is to reflect that the originals were one day young, and perhaps beautiful.

The dinner was not very lively—Algitha's spirits were oppressed by the magnificence which surrounded her; the plate had been the present of some corporation, on the occasion of Mr. Leslie having completed the third year of his mayoralty; the arms of the family were sprinkled all over it; three bees, with an anvil for the crest, and "labore" for a motto. It was massive in its proportions, but wanting in the grace of London workmanship. The dinner was of course excellent, for none understand the art of living better than the Liverpool merchants.

"Papa," said Ida, "Algitha tells me that she is very fond of riding; you will lend her your favourite pony, will you not? I want to show her all the new walks you propose making; the points of view"—and here she slightly coloured, remembering how new she was to the place—"she knows better than I do."

"Certainly, my darling," replied Mr. Leslie. "I had arranged to take Mr. Vane the identical round to-morrow, so that we may all go together. I did not think that Miss Algitha would have liked such an exploring and dilatory ride."

"I should like it beyond anything," said Algitha—"I have not ridden for so long—Ernest was not able to find me a horse he liked. I think it will be much more agreeable to make a party together, than to go on different expeditions, if Miss Leslie is of the same opinion."

"Indeed I am," was Ida's reply; "but on one condition," she continued, smiling, "that you do not call me Miss Leslie—it sounds so very formal; if you do, I shall have to call you Miss Vane; perhaps I ought to have done so, but I am very ignorant of etiquette."

A kind merry look conveyed the required assurance, and by the time the party broke up, Ida and Algitha were as confidential as if they had known one another from childhood.

It seemed strange to Ernest to be sleeping

within those old walls, every corner of which was associated in his mind with some trick of a wild and fanciful, albeit generally a melancholy, youth; melancholy—not always of an unpleasing description—is as natural to some dispositions as gaiety is to others. There is an opera called “The Val d’Andore;” throughout the whole of it there is not one air which it would be easy for the most retentive memory to recall; and yet so strange a strain of sorrow runs through it, that it leaves a sad impression, although the listener finds it difficult to define the cause; thus the overture of some men’s lives is solemn and deep-toned, and the whole of their existence partakes of the same peculiarity. Do what they will, they cannot escape from these sensations; be it fatality, or explain it by what term you may, the feeling exists at the last as it did at the first.

Such was Ernest’s character; faulty in some respects, weak in others; its principal feature was the grave view which he took on most subjects; the sense of obligation, so unusual in a man of his age, which had grown up with him. It was the result of an education far different to that to which most men are subjected; for in his daily intercourse with those teachers of the superior accomplishments which are found at Stonyhurst, he had learnt to reflect deeply on matters of primary importance, but which only receive secondary consideration in most of our public seminaries. He was attached to the memory of that faith for which so many of his ancestors had fallen. The Church, to his mind, involved a meaning of far graver import than that which is in general assigned to it in England. Without presumption or intolerance, he loved to see those fortunes, which men are apt to squander in selfish objects, bestowed on the Church. He gloried in her glory, felt strengthened in her strength. These convictions, boldly expressed, whenever boldness was essential, obtained him great influence among those whom he was accustomed to mix with; for, laugh as we may, in idle moments, at the enthusiastic, is it not ever the case “that the history of the enthusiastic is the history of the successful?”

His was, therefore, a character, as has been already observed, not much to be understood in what is called the world. Not that the people who compose that society which has assumed that title to itself are disposed to ridicule such enthusiasm or despise its objects, but simply that they live on from year to year, and then again from year to year, in one

circle of feelings and emotions, from which it is difficult to emancipate themselves; there is an immense difference of disposition, of views, and of opinions between the very same description of men educated in London or in the country; and it cannot be otherwise, for one half of the London opinions are taken second-hand; it is the shortest, easiest, and least offensive way of forming judgment on all things human or divine.

Sensitiveness is the first feature of our natural character; it will be found in all societies, but perhaps nowhere more developed than in London; it leads at once to much that is good, and to a great deal that is evil. If it could be shaken off, and people were prepared to act more independently of each other’s opinions, we should have much fewer vices, but at the same time much fewer virtues, to record.

Such is Ernest in the country—the man of retirement. Let us glance for a moment at one who will play an important part in this work; a man of the same age, but a man of the world.

CHAPTER VII.

A PARTY is assembled at Long’s.

The room is hung with portraits of men of the past and the present day—small ill-executed engravings; still, such as they are, they are memorials of those who used to dine together, and whose festivities were sometimes prolonged until far into the night; these were, however, in the good old times; in that room there are records of great feats performed, by some gentlemen of three, four, or five-bottle reputation; all this has changed now; but there is not on that account less kind feeling, less warmth of friendship, less earnestness, as that room can still testify.

“How long are we to wait dinner for these fellows?” asked Mauley, who had just entered the Guards. His observation was a general one, but responded to by Welby—a tall aristocratic young man, who was wiling away the time by looking out of the window with intense interest at a scuffle which was taking place between a policeman and a barrel-organ boy.

“You had better order dinner at once, my dear Fred,” was the reply; “I know it is of no use waiting for Percy. I saw him and Graham riding through the Apsley-house Gate, just as I drove by; it is a confounded shame of fellows being so unpunctual; but it is always the same thing with Percy and Graham!”

"What a capital fellow Graham is!" continued Mauley. "I never knew him until last year, when I was elected; he looks a good deal worn, though, for his age. Do you know how old he is, Welby?"

"Why, I am sorry to say I do," was the answer; "for I was the same year at college; only, I scarcely knew him at all. I was at Oriel, and he was at Christ Church, and at that time the Christ Church men were famous for keeping up the old absurd etiquettes. But he was very popular. Let me see; it was at the time poor Belmont died; so he must be about two-and-thirty. By Jove! what a sensation that death made! I shall never forget it. I was riding down the High Street when we met the poor fellow's body; but all this is history to you, my dear Mauley. Ah! I only wish I was your age. But let me see; I was talking of Graham. Well, do you know, you spoke of Graham's melancholy. There was something or another very odd happened after that accident, in connexion with Belmont's sister, but I never could get at the rights of the story; but Dudley, whom you never knew, for he died long before your time, at Smyrna, married Miss Belmont, and I think Graham fell in love with her; that is as much as I know about it. Mrs. Dudley died twelve months after her marriage. I know that Graham was with her when she died; and if ever Dudley's name is mentioned, he grows deadly pale. Lord Vavasour, who was there at the time, is the only man who knows the real facts of the case, and you never can get him to talk on the subject."

"What a beautiful speech Vavasour made the other night!" said Fitzroy; "were you there, Welby?"

"No, I could not get in. I went down to the Lords; but it was impossible to find standing-room. I never saw such a crush in my life. It was very good, was it?"

"Wonderful! the finest thing I ever heard. I think, next to Brougham, he is the best speaker in the Lords. When does he sail for St. Petersburg?"

"He is not going to St. Petersburg, after all," replied Welby, who appeared to be quite *au fait* at all the gossip, political or social, of London; "he is going to a much nicer place—Constantinople. There! what do you think of that?—is not that luck? I wish to goodness he would take me as secretary. I declare I would go."

"I should think so," muttered Fitzroy; "but you will have to wait a long time first."

Dinner was announced, and the small party sat down. After the shortest space of time—that is, after Fitzroy had filled three or four bumpers of Champagne, Percy and Graham entered, and were received with a burst of enthusiasm.

"It would serve you quite right if you found everything cold, Graham," exclaimed Welby, "for I called out to you as loud as I could roar, just as you and Percy were sauntering through the Park, and peeping into every carriage that passed with a pretty brunette in it."

"That's more in your line than mine," said Lord Graham, with a melancholy smile.

Yes, he had changed. His whole appearance was that of a man on whose heart a great mystery—a heavy secret—is pressing. It was not the change merely from twenty to thirty-two, although such a lapse of time, something even in the history of a nation, is everything in the life of a man; a change from the joyous, elastic, bounding impulse of youth, to the collected, cautious, matured middle age; from happy ignorance to mournful knowledge; from the romance of life to its material necessities; a change from hope to disappointment; from the infinity of love to finite affection. And, alas, this progress of age! it is the only evil which increases upon us, even while we are lamenting it. Time brings a cure to almost every misfortune; to severed hopes; to blighted affections; to social bereavement; but the evil of age and the nearer approach to the grave is hour by hour aggravated; imperceptibly, indeed; but then at times it bursts upon us with all its load of misery, just as a traveller along a road, leaving a loved home, sometimes forgets the distance he has travelled, until at intervals the milestone prevents the possibility of all self-deception. But if this be so painful a transition for men, what must it be for women? where the loss of youth is the loss too often of all that makes youth so beautiful and enviable; who consider the bloom on the cheek and the light on the countenance as beyond all price. Surely, unless the woman is sustained by noble pursuits, unless she has occupations and interests beyond the circle of every-day life, the progress of age in her is death by slow tortures; it is the approach of night without its loveliness; without the harmony of its planetary system, or the glory of its myriad lights; of night, shrouded in worse than Stygian or Cimmerian darkness.

To a man of the quick imagination of Cecil

Graham, this change alone would have sufficed to have made him unhappy; but we too well know that there were other causes for that melancholy which stamped his countenance. Some, perhaps, who have hitherto followed his career in a work entitled "*Lucille Belmont*," may marvel that he ever survived the events which were recorded in those volumes. But, alas! such people are ill-read in the history of the heart; they have not learnt how much sorrow the human frame can bear and survive. Cecil Graham was broken by the blow; three months he remained at Venice, without the power of being removed, and during that time Vavasour had attended him with all the affection and consideration of a parent, whose place he had truly supplied; for when Cecil was able to bear the shock of the intelligence, he was told that Lord Graham was dead. There is happily a point in mental suffering which cannot be increased, just as surgeons tell us that, after a certain amount of torture, the human frame is incapable of suffering pain; and Cecil had attained this point. His whole character changed after these events; from the gay lively boy, the soul of all parties, he became grave and broken-spirited, and, most strange, that irresolute character was converted into an indomitable self-will, which almost amounted to obstinacy. He retained, however, the same affectionate warmth of character which endeared him to a large circle of friends. He rushed into political life, and, by excess of study, endeavoured to occupy a mind which was always devouring itself. His success was very great in the career on which he entered; he successively became under-secretary for the Home Department, vice-president of the Board of Trade, and was highly esteemed by all parties. Such was Lord Graham at thirty-two; an object of interest to all into whose society he was thrown, and who had everything to make life enjoyable, if he could have quaffed from the stream of oblivion.

There was still another place vacant.

"Who the deuce is coming here, Welby?" cried Mauley.

"Luttrell, to be sure," was Percy's exclamation.

George Percy, the beloved of all, with his ready wit, his retentive memory, and his abundant reading. Brilliant, above all, where none were wanting in brilliancy, possessing that most enviable of all qualities, a perfect readiness, a power of calling up any faculty of the mind whenever it was required. Quick

in his temper, but so easily convinced of error, that every slight cause of difference only ended in endearing him still more deeply to the circle of his friends. He was one of those favoured beings whose society, after having been long enjoyed, becomes indispensable; whose appearance is the signal for a burst of enthusiasm, and whose absence is a prolonged regret.

And there was one of that party, who joined it that day for the last time, whom it would be unmeet not to record here—as he is recorded in the most solemn recesses of the hearts of those who loved; that is, in the hearts of those who knew him. There are losses in life which can never be replaced, voids which can never be filled up. When he died, it was the first blank in that happy circle, and the one most sensibly felt. Others followed; but the repeated action of grief is like the Medusa's head, only, it turns the heart, and not the body, to stone. There is no death like the first; it is like the first touch of frost, which tells us that the summer is gone, and that there is a certain winter approaching. It awakens us to the full apprehension of that change which all men believe in, but which so few attempt to realize. The vacant space left at the table is powerful to affect the feelings as that skeleton which the ancients sometimes placed at the end of the banquet, to remind them that life was short, and to incite them to dissipation. On this occasion he we speak of, was the animating spirit of the scene; on the eve of starting on those travels from which he was never to return; full of gallant daring, of boyish excitement, and yet within two months the tomb was to close over it all. Oh, my friend! Brave, generous, and brilliant, upon the table before me is the book you gave me with the pencilled notes, in which I trace that imagination which led you to a brighter clime, and a death such as genius loves to die. Here are the last records of that friendship, which, commencing amid the joyous follies of life, has been consecrated to me by the thousand memories of an imperishable affection. But not unblessed was thy fate; it was thine to perish, but ever to be remembered, as when we last saw thee, with all the glory of youth upon thy brow; to perish in a clime warm and genial as thine own heart, in that sacred soil where faith appeals to the soul, through the direct influence of that nature which has been consecrated by the presence of the living God; to sleep, a son of the Church, in the bosom of

the land where the foundations of the Church were first laid—in that East, to which we turn with bended knee and lowly reverence.

At that moment Luttrell entered. As a man whose destiny is mixed up with our story, it may be permitted us to describe him. He was the only son of Lord Linton, whom we have mentioned as Mr. Leslie's friend. He might have been six-and-twenty, but scarcely looked so much; he was tall, and of a light and graceful carriage; his hair clustered round his forehead, and fell in silken curls to his neck, so delicate and finely formed, that none could, for a moment, have imagined that his heart was not cast in the same mould of purity and refinement;—but it was far otherwise. From the age of eighteen, dissipation of the most reckless and abandoned kind had destroyed the energies of his mind, shattered his health, and weakened every principle; and it was not merely the late hours, the reeking atmosphere of the dens of low grovelling vice, the society of the profane coarse woman, with the gloss of sin on her forehead; it was not this alone that had ruined his heart, for, strange to say, scenes which, if a woman once for a moment glanced at, her soul and mind would be for ever polluted, a man sometimes can pass through, and yet remain almost pure. As was beautifully said of Mr. Fox, by Sir James Mackintosh, after the wildest life, "He died with the heart of a new-born child." In the language of Horace Walpole, some men's hearts, like a chapel in a palace, remain unprofaned, while all the rest is tyranny, corruption, and folly. It is not gross dissipation which is the most dangerous; the man of taste, the gentleman, will soon be revolted at it, and be ashamed of a career in which he degrades himself. The dissipation most fatal in its consequences is that which refines the mind, which suffocates under rose leaves, which fills the atmosphere with the most delicious odours, which treads lightly on the softest Aubusson, which is covered with the richest and most luxurious silks, the very harmony of which is seductive, and which reposes on the softest pillows, which appeals to the imagination in the most winning accents, and to the senses by all that can soften and subdue them; this is the dissipation under which the heart's best purposes, under which the noblest energies give way; it is the light touch, and not the rude grasp, that thrills to the bone; it is the one soft sad word, that is remembered when loud and bold expressions of

passion are forgotten. There are some who, after long nights of revelling, will feel their manhood debased, and when they pass a church-portal enter in and weep between the porch and the altar. There are some who can even at last tear themselves away from the voice of the Syren, and will, after their Capuan existence, learn to appreciate virtue and innocence; there are very few who embark into the two existences, who are at once grossly abandoned and refinedly dissipated, and repent of neither; but Luttrell dashed at once into both careers, and in both was greatly successful; that is, among the daring spirits who cast aside all laws human and divine, he stood pre-eminent; you could not but marvel at the audacity of the man, who could so openly repudiate all the obligations of life, and the faith that proclaimed them; and yet, to look at his high, clear, well-shaped forehead, his still limpid blue eye, his easy undisturbed demeanour as he rode down Rotten Row, and nodded and smiled to his numerous acquaintances, no one would have believed how his nights had been passed, the brutal language he had listened to, or the fumes of corruption, moral and physical, which he had been inhaling; still less would they have believed that after being the witness of scenes calculated to freeze up all the warm currents of the heart, he could, in the early morning, go from these orgies to a house in which art had exhausted all its refinements, to make it the abode of love, if not of happiness.

The inmate of it was young and fair; she was the daughter of a Tyrolese gentleman, in whose house Luttrell was one night during his travels driven to ask shelter. To repay all this kindness by the seduction of the gentleman's daughter was with Luttrell a matter of course; but he did not perform this feat in a common vulgar way. He was no ordinary seducer. He induced her to run away with him, by the old hackneyed story of a solemn promise to marry her. He brought her to England, and the worst which the old father imagined for some time was, that she had run away to be married; for in that part of the country they are very simple, and not well read in the customs of modern refinement. It would have been well if the old man had remained in ignorance of the real state of the case; but, as it happened, some kind friend told him the truth. He doated upon his daughter Marie; he used, in her long absence, to sit in the garden, and watch a glass hive which she formerly delighted in,

when the Pic of the Gschaid Mountain glowed in the sunset, or stood, white, solemn, and mysterious, like the guardian of the valley, in the blue twilight. The old officer—for he had served long and gallantly in the wars, and had been a friend of Hofer's—thought of the Marie who loved to attend his steps, and who believed at that time that nothing was more beautiful than her native valley, that no architecture was half so graceful as that of her village church, no fête so joyous as that fête-day when she used, with her band of kirtled and hooded friends, to stroll forth amid the glens and passes, picking the blushing wild flowers, and sometimes wandering even to the very edge of the eternal snow. Those were happy days for her and her father, until this handsome young Englishman arrived, and then the spots which pleased her once pleased her no more. So, when the old man heard the truth, he died—to die of a broken heart is not so uncommon as people imagine.

It was towards this child, the daughter who forsook her father's gods, that Luttrell daily bent his steps.

Does it stamp London society with opprobrium to say that this man was much liked? Not so, for the young are not generally censorious; nor ought they to be so, of the intimate life of a man, unless he violates the world's principles of honour and faith, unless he offends against the police of society, they know nothing, and trouble themselves very little how he passes his time; besides, if men were to set themselves up as censors, they could not pass their judgments with any degree of security; for two men shall live precisely in the same society, and lead precisely the same kind of life, with very different results; the one man's heart may be utterly depraved; the other may be constantly fighting against the bondage that oppresses him. Moreover, Luttrell was most fascinating, with a very excellent ready wit, and a winning voice, and although he had read little or nothing, yet, as his attention was always on the alert, he picked up a great deal of information, of one kind or another.

He had recently exchanged from the Guards for a company in some regiment of the line, for his extravagance had quite ruined Lord Linton, and he had solemnly told him that this was the very last effort he would make to save him; that he was to join his regiment, quartered at Bangor, immediately, and break off all his London habits.—Marie came under the head of a London habit,

Luttrell took his place at the table with the careless air of a man on whom outward objects have very little effect; and yet, as he addressed each one in turn, nothing could exceed the grace of his manner, or the sincerity which he threw into his voice.

"You are always so confoundedly punctual, my dear fellows. As for Percy, you have quite bit him; he used to keep me company; now I have to dine like a solitaire. What soups are there, Mac Arthur?"

"Potage à la Palestine and bisque," was the head-waiter's reply.

"That won't do, Luttrell," cried Percy; "if you come so fashionably late, you shall live on entrées."

"Well, I can do without soup, or fish, or pièce de resistance," said Luttrell, with the most perfect nonchalance. "Only give me plenty of wine. I have given up eating now; all I like is, long, long glasses of champagne."

And he drank them off one after the other, scarcely touching any food. He had attained that state when the digestion is utterly ruined, and the spirits can only be sustained by wine and excitement; eating oppressed him. After a few minutes his wit began to scintillate.

"Now Luttrell is becoming like himself," cried Percy; and he prepared himself for the smart repartee, the glittering antithesis, and admirable paradox. Luttrell had just sufficient power to draw out George Percy.

"Yes," said Welby, "he was quite hipped when first he came in. What was it about, Luttrell?"

"I know," cried out another; "he lost heavily at the Berkeley last night. Was not that it, Luttrell?"

"Not at all," was the reply. "You would be hipped too if you were in my situation. Fancy having to leave London to-morrow afternoon, to be quartered at such an infernal place as Bangor, after having enjoyed oneself in the Guards for seven years. Some one will pick up my body floating down the Menai Straits; for I am sure that I shall never be able to sustain life there for more than a month; and then I expect I shall not have any more leave for another six months. Altogether, I think it is a most towering shame.

"I wish I were a gentleman at large,
Lodged and fed at public charge,"

instead of having to wear the cursed livery that I am buttoned up in all day long."

"Well, there is a good time coming, my dear Luttrell," exclaimed Welby; "it is no use in kicking against the pricks; take it coolly." Welby was of a happy joyous disposition. If doing kind offices for others can make a man happy, Welby should have been very much so indeed; his whole life was a succession of acts of goodness, toleration, and forbearance.

Graham left early. His departure was the signal for expressions of kindness and interest, which in his presence none of these young men ventured to utter; but once out of the room, they ran round the circle; the terms "good fellow," "honourable," "high-minded," fell from every lip. Oh! how little did they imagine that he left to engage in toil, only self-imposed, to ward off the gloomy feelings which oppressed him; that he left the room to pray in silence and solitude; that in all this boon companionship, this brotherhood, his heart felt alone; that they, although so endeared to him, were only second in his affections to a love which even had increased with the loss of the object; that the idea which he had cherished was enshrined in the holiest of holies of his heart; that now, when the human form had passed away, he felt that he must pray for it in spirit, and he did so until his mind had become subdued by his misfortunes, and through sorrow he had learnt the practice of virtue.

We have followed Cecil Graham to his retirement; we should, perhaps, better trace the characters of others if we accompanied them also to their homes. "*Dis-moi qui tu hantes, et je te dirai qui tu es*;" is the well-known French proverb; but you may better tell what a man is by his conduct in solitude; is he oppressed by it, or does he reflect upon the past, on the time lost, on the opportunities idly squandered? does he rush into distractions to relieve his mind from the burden which he feels himself unable to bear? What Luttrell did, we at least know; for even on his reckless hardened heart the events of that night are recorded in indelible letters.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY had all left him; two by two they strolled off, and he stood in Albemarle Street alone; but they had not parted without kind words and protestations of affection, promises of correspondence, so soon to be broken, of remembrance, so transient in their fulfilment. He knew this, for he was a keen reader of the human heart; but he knew at the same time

that on the present occasion all these promises of friendship were dictated by the kindest feelings—and even he was touched by them. He had excused himself from joining any of their plans for the evening, for he had to perform the saddest obligation that had ever yet been thrust upon him—to take leave of Marie, and, above all, to bid her take leave of that luxury and refinement which had dignified her existence, and concealed its guilt, by plating sin with gold. Up to this last day, without allowing his manner to manifest the least anxiety, he had been wrestling with the necessities of his position; like a strong swimmer, in his supreme agony, he had resorted to every means to obtain money, so as to enable him to continue this career but for a few weeks longer, but all his efforts were vain.

He imagined that his anxiety to continue his present mode of life was occasioned by his love for Marie; but it was not so; he did feel in some degree for her, but not a tithe of what he should have done; true, he could not bear to leave her; she was to him—an article of luxury from which he dreaded to part; nor could he endure the idea of relinquishing all the pleasures, the extravagancies, the sybarite luxury of his present existence, for a barrack yard; the society of Marie, with her long black hair and her soft smile and gentle voice, for the rude boisterous merriment of a marching regiment. Up to that morning he had hoped, as condemned criminals ever hope, that something would have occurred to have averted this terrible necessity; but no, the world rolls on, in its routine manner, never diverted from its course by wishes, regrets, or protestations, and that morning he had received a notice from the Horse Guards, reprimanding him severely for not having conformed to the rules of the service, and commanding him to join his regiment within thirty-six hours.

Against this order there was no appeal. He went to Lord Linton, and told him it was his intention to sell out. A scene of the utmost violence ensued, after which, from the sheer impossibility of existing without his profession, Luttrell had to give way. He did so with unseemly expressions in his father's presence, which broke into fierce imprecations the moment Lord Linton had left the room; but there was no help for it; he determined to enjoy himself that evening at least, whatever might happen the next morning, and not to say farewell to Marie until the evening. We have seen how entirely his hopes of dis-

traction had failed, that his low spirits were at once remarked; but his friends did not know the cause, and therefore could not estimate the amount of his suffering. They knew little of Marie; his possession of such a treasure was spoken of, but nothing more. She had been seen occasionally, at the opera or the French play, when every one turned round to admire the beautiful girl, and to envy the man who accompanied her; but to none but one or two most favoured of his boon companions was the mystery that shrouded her existence revealed.

This arose from no feeling of jealousy on the part of Luttrell; but it gratified his vanity to be the subject of vague gossip and conversation; like many men who are to be met with in London. If Luttrell had been offered the choice of the reputation of possessing the entire affection of a loving, innocent, and beautiful woman, without there being the least foundation for such a report, or of having such a heart devoted to him without the world's knowing it, he would have chosen the first. Marie was just what he desired; if he had been asked which had been the pleasantest moment of his life, he would have said the first night he took Marie to the opera, when every opera-glass was turned towards the box in which she sat, when he heard the bitter accent of mortified disparagement, and the loud-expressed praise as she passed through the crush-room; his cup was brim-full that evening, for he returned to the lobby, and men as they hurried by exclaimed, "By Jove, Luttrell, you are a lucky fellow at everything in the ring; what a beautiful woman! Where the deuce does she spring from?" These were the sentences which greeted his ears, which he treasured in his heart, and on his deathbed he will probably hear them again.

It was to Marie he was now forced to go. He would willingly have avoided the distressing task, but it was impossible. She lived not far from Albemarle Street, in Piccadilly; he had a latch-key, and he opened the door silently. No one, whose experience has not taught them to how great an excess the luxury of the Sybarite life is carried on the continent, could have imagined the taste and elegance of this house, or rather apartment, for the lower part of the house was not used. The ante-room that led to the drawing-room was surrounded by gilt brackets, on which the most perfect specimens of Sèvres porcelain, and gracefully modelled antique vases, and

small glistening cameos were placed. Portions of Marie's own workmanship vied in colour with the flowers which, at this season of the year, filled the fire-place, and every available nook in the room.

The drawing-room was redolent of perfume; the carpet, of the softest material, was again partially covered by Smyrna rugs, of the richest and most extravagant texture. Ormolu, glass, and alabaster, loaded every table, made of marqueterie, and inlaid with old Sèvres; and on the walls, which were lined with blue silk and gold, were suspended by gold cords the most admirable productions of Lemoine, Watteau, and Boucher. There might be seen those beautiful creations of the age of Louis XV.; the little marchioness, with her vermilion mouth, so small, so pouting, so self-willed, the hair drawn back from her forehead, the dazzling whiteness of which was set off by the powder; with the patch on the cheek, the curious appendage of the beauties of that day—there she was represented reclining on a sofa of curious workmanship, holding in her hand, white and delicate as a snowdrop, the wild violet, the emblem of love in idleness; while her feet, encased in the small satin shoes, with high red heels, reposed listlessly on a Persian cushion. There were other pictures more glowing in their beauty:—

"Young nymphs, beautiful and fair
Maidens, with their golden hair."

The dressing-closet, with its rich silver ornaments, and toilet-covers decorated with the richest lace, was worthy of the furniture of the other rooms. Even the very glass was framed with silver, moulded into a graceful and classical shape. All this had been furnished at an expense of some thousands by Luttrell; thousands which he had raised at a most enormous rate of interest, and which was now all to pass from him. He lit the branches which were standing on the velvet golden-fringed mantel-piece, and looked round the room—it was death to leave all this; no, he would not go. He buried his head in his hands; the excitement of the day was too much for a frame which was naturally delicate, and he fell into a sullen sleep, from which he was awakened by a cry.

It was the voice of Marie; and she was murmuring his name in her slumber. He left the lights burning, and, with the taper in his hand, rose from his seat. If Marie had uttered his name, she had fallen to sleep again.

He drew aside the graceful lace curtain which was drawn around the bed, and the light streamed upon her countenance; she had been assuredly disturbed, for low sounds, like the spirits of a dream, floated round her lips. Her black hair fell over the pillow, and one white sculptured arm was lying languidly outside the snowy linen. The lovely countenance of the poor child—for she was only nineteen—was partially hid by the shadow of the curtain. Luttrell gazed on her long and anxiously. Should he disturb that repose, soft and gentle as of innocence? But for him, she was innocent; he thought of what she had been, and of what he had made her; of the contrast between her present dainty refinements, and the pallid misery which he knew was in store for her; and, as he turned round, his eye caught the light glimmering in a small oratory which she had fitted up, and where every morning she was wont to kneel before a cross that stood there on a slight altar. Strange contrast—a cross in the chamber of guilt! to the unmerciful, to those who do not consider that deceived hearts may be most guileless; that this child knew only that she loved, and believed not that love was sin; such contrast is inexplicable. When Luttrell had gazed upon her for a long time he retraced his steps, and returned again to his own room. The remembrance of the past swept across his brow, and left a damp upon it, like the moisture which hangs over graves. At that moment he would have given all he had in the world, or rather all he had once possessed, to have recalled the last year—to have restored Marie to the home she loved—to her mountains and her valley; the hardness of his heart was deserting him; the courage, or rather the bold depravity, which had sustained him hitherto, was bending like a reed beneath the storm; it was almost involuntarily, and in a voice of desperation, that he came back to her room and pronounced her name.

The heart is never deceived; sleep as we may, affection is ever on the watch. Marie rose in her bed, and with her hair falling over her delicate and rounded shoulders, her eyes fixed with earnestness on Alfred's countenance, exclaimed—

“Alfred, how late you are! Why do you awake me?”

He put down the light, and placed his arm round her neck; he touched her cheek with his pale cold lips.

“Oh!” said she, almost shrinking from

the touch, “your lips are like ice, and your hand—so cold!” and she pressed it to her lips, as if to restore its natural warmth.

There was a pause.

“I know what it is,” she exclaimed wildly, with one hand pushing back the curls which fell over her forehead, and with the other pressing his hand convulsively—“I know what it is, Alfred; you have been playing again, and have lost heavily.”

“No, Marie,” he replied, with a melancholy smile, “I have just come from dinner.”

“Oh, now I see it all, then,” she cried, with that intonation of a mental agony which even severe physical pain cannot always call forth. “Now I see it all. You have been dining—you have involved yourself in a quarrel—you are to fight—you have come to say good-bye to me. Is this it, Alfred?”

“No, again, Marie,” he answered, with the same painful harassing smile settled on his face. “I dined with a party of the kindest friends.” His accent at first mocked the words; but it softened as he continued—“I believe they really are all kind friends—at least they tell me so; at all events, they were not likely people to quarrel with me.” And he continued, after a pause, “Why do you imagine anything evil, Marie?”

“Alfred,” said the poor girl, “your question proves that you have never loved deeply, or you would know well that there is a wonderful power in the heart to read the text of affection; that she who loves can tell instinctively the state of another's heart in which her own is centred. I know, Alfred, that it is difficult to judge by your countenance. You have the very great power of concealing all you feel; but latterly, in spite of all your efforts, I have seen a change fall upon you; you have not been able entirely to hide from me those lines of sorrow and pain which I see drawn on your countenance; you cannot tell how agitated you look even at this moment. You will call me superstitious, Alfred; but I have a presentiment that something evil is going to happen to me, for just now I was dreaming of my home—that dear home;” and she turned toward the bed-side, where a picture of the valley of the Ampezzo, and her loved Tyrolese home, was hanging. “I was picturing all those happy days which I passed there—how I used to wander about with Agathe—dear Agathe, who died—how I cried over her grave!—for we resembled each other like sisters, and loved with sisters' love. And then I imagined that I was sitting with

her in that beautiful garden. It seemed to be spring-time, and we were playing with the Marguerites. Dis-moi, dis-moi, s'il m'aime? Un peu! beaucoup! passionnément! pas du tout! Ah, yes;" and the tears fell down the poor girl's cheek. "So it is, Alfred, un peu, un peu, et pas du tout; but then, again, I dreamed of your arrival at our village—of the second night you passed at Santa Croce, when, you remember, we stood on the balcony, and watched the shadows which the clouds cast on the giant hills—so cold, and glistening in the moonshine, with the village spire pointing to heaven, like a finger of solemn warning, in the pale night. You remember then I told you, Alfred, I preferred that church, that humble spire, to all the gorgeous cathedrals I had read of; and my native cottage to the palace in the great city, of which I had been told. I said, I knew that it was thought by some people a great proof of affection, to leave the bustle, and pomp, and splendour of life, for peace and tranquil affection; but for me, the sacrifice would be to leave my cottage for the excitement and grandeur of life, for the society of the great—that I never could do this. But then I had not known you long, Alfred—yet one truth, at least, I did say, that I wished to die very young; and if I had died, Alfred, I should not have suffered the misery I sometimes now feel. I should not have shuddered at the last scene of this night's dream. Bend down your head while I whisper it. I imagined myself sitting in the centre of a churchyard, with three graves, freshly filled, lying before me; and when I read the inscriptions, I saw, first, Agathe, then my beloved father, and last of all, my own. But there was another unfinished grave, Alfred, which two men were digging, while a third was carving the monument. He seemed at that moment to be inscribing the name, and I deciphered the word 'ALFRED,' and an 'L-U-T...' It was the crowning horror of my dream; and it was then that I disturbed you by calling your name. But I was so weak from fear, that I fell asleep again immediately. Was it not terrible, Alfred? Speak to me!"

He did not respond to the appeal; his eyes were fixed on the wall, with an expression of agony; and when he passed his hand across his forehead, he withdrew it—damp, nay, even dripping; the iron had entered into his soul—such glorious youth and such abject sin were united in his person.

Marie sank back on her pillow; but her hand still clasped his, and she pressed it con-

vulsively to her lips. It needed no word to assure her of the truth of her omen; there was a mystery impending over her fate, and she felt it to be fatal to her happiness.

"Marie," said Alfred, after a long pause, "I had not intended to have spoken to you until the morning. In the morning, light gives strength to hear evil, and this is a fearful one. I will press you to my heart this night, and in the morning tell you all."

"No, no," she muttered, "I shall not be able to sleep; tell me now."

"Well, then," and he gasped convulsively, "there is no use deceiving you; in truth the deception cannot continue any longer; every moment brings the fatal moment nearer to us. Marie, we are to part."

When he had uttered the words, he would have died to recall them; for if he had shot her through the heart, she could not have leaped more convulsively in her bed; she became pale as the sheet that covered her; the hand that held his own released its hold, and fell languid and death-like; she might have been dead, but for the gasping in her throat, and the convulsive twinges in her countenance.

Luttrell buried his head in his hands; and he, the betrayer, for a few brief moments was revolted at his own selfish vanity, which could only be gratified by the ruin of another. As he looked around him, and reflected on the extravagance which he had lavished on her who loved him, he began to think how much he had lost and sacrificed by his blind and cruel selfishness; but for this he might have still lingered on some months in town, and, as he would term it, have still been happy.

She recovered slowly from her trance, and, looking steadily on his countenance, said, "You are ruined, Alfred!"

"Utterly," was his reply.

A ray of light and hope shot across her countenance.

"I see it all, Alfred," she exclaimed; "you are ruined for my happiness—to promote all my wishes—and you think that I have not strength of mind enough to share your misfortunes. Oh, how little you know me! Sell everything, Alfred, and I will live with you, even as your servant. I liked all this luxury because I thought it pleased you, but for no other reason. In the humblest simplest cottage I should be happy, perhaps—but it sounds ungrateful to say so—even happier than here; for you know, Alfred, how simply I lived in

the Tyrol, and how few my wants are. Well, then, if you are unfortunate, let us take a cottage in some quiet place; we can live for so little there, and, loving each other as we do—"

She started, and stopped; for there was a curious expression in his eye, as she described the pleasures of tranquil life, of two beings with their hearts and hopes intertwined, going through life together. A cold sneer settled on his face; that was not what he wanted—he revolted at the very idea; how much she had misunderstood him; he live in a retired spot, in domestic happiness! If the agony of separation was painful to him, the picture she drew of happiness was scarcely less so. Two passions were at war in his breast, love and vanity; but the latter was the most powerful of the two. Hitherto they had been reconcilable; but now they were opposed to each other, and the latter would assuredly be the victor.

And then, and not until then, the truth dawned upon her, that there was something beyond her knowledge in that man's heart—there was a chapter she had never read.

"You are talking nonsense now, Marie. I don't want to say anything to annoy you at such a moment, but it is sheer nonsense."

We have all felt at times how distressing is the effect of a cold ironical remark when applied to warm and enthusiastic feelings—how entirely it turns back the current of the heart, and checks its expression; the effect produced frequently far exceeds the cause; it conveys an uncomfortable sensation, from which it is impossible to escape. Such was the case in the present instance; the young girl felt from that moment that there was no hope for her, not from the force of circumstances, not in consequence of the reasons which Luttrell had adduced, but from the look which his countenance wore. There are glances which the heart never mistakes, and never forgets. In the lapse of a few seconds she seemed to have lived through years of experience. Luttrell had not feeling enough to understand her silence; he imagined her calm when she was only heart-broken.

"Well, Marie," he said, "I did not intend to speak unkindly to you, and, as we are to part so soon, I should be sorry not to part good friends. The truth is, my child, I am compelled to join my regiment to-morrow; there is no possibility of delay, unless I sacrifice my profession, (his profession! what, in God's name, was to be her profession now?)

and this I will not, and cannot do. No; these things cannot be avoided, and you must bear up against it, my dear girl." (He spoke very calmly; now the man of the world had driven out the man of imagination.) "You will have all the furniture which is here, and I can afford you one hundred a-year. This will make you quite comfortable, and——"

Her eyes were still fixed on his, large, sad, solemn, but not tearful. She seemed to understand him, yet her look was unmeaning. It was a dangerous crisis, and, by God's mercy, the man seemed to feel it, for suddenly he exclaimed, as he saw her eye still fixed on his—

"And if you are really a good girl, I will write to you twice a-week, and you shall write to me."

Then, indeed, she raised her head, and the tears flowed forth abundantly; and again she snatched that hand which had first encircled her waist, and her kisses and tears mingled together.

"Thank—thank you, dear Alfred," she murmured; "you are kind, and I am unworthy."

Unworthy, poor child! we may exclaim; and what is he who made thee so? He who never reflected on the glory of creation as it glowed on thy brow, on thy sweet innocence; on those virtues which led to thy sin, as men rush to danger from abundance of courage; who would not cherish thee, my sweet broken-hearted child, and restore thee to the home thou lovest so well! Unworthy! would that I were worthy to pray for thee, for thy affections, though troubled now, were at one time crystal in their purity. Yes, I would die for thee; whereas men shall now revile and persecute thee—oh, my God!

CHAPTER IX.

THERE are two descriptions of mental suffering—the suffering of the heart's best affections, which is purifying, blessed, and holy; and the suffering of pride and vanity, which is mean, humiliating, and degrading.

The first, however agonising and painful, has nothing humiliating in it; on the contrary, the intensity of grief elevates the character which is borne down under the pressure of much sorrow; the dull become eloquent, and the most matter-of-fact imaginative. We continue lamenting, as though to mourn were a religious obligation—as though tears were the waters of salvation.

And the tears do flow then abundantly and

unchecked. The soul is open to all the sweetest impressions, the heart is full of commiseration, of love, and of pity; all the misfortunes which surround us are cherished by our own, as belonging to the same family-circle of affliction.

But if, on the contrary, we suffer from wounded pride and vanity, then the heart is full of bitterness, of concentrated passions. Here there is nothing to dignify and to help us; fear for the future, regret for the past, hate for all around; these are the constituent elements of this grief, the very life and youth within us becomes hateful; for it is life without the power of enjoyment; like that hell, which fills the heart of the old and vicious, when they retain the recollections of lust and passion in a decayed and withered frame.

Of these two different descriptions of sufferings the examples are before us. Marie felt only for Alfred. She had erred, it is true, but so entirely through the confidence of her affection, that she could scarcely be judged harshly; she loved Alfred with the warmth of a young and ardent imagination, that imagination which had grown up in dangerous solitude, beneath the influence of a golden sun and a nature of marvellous attraction, where every night is a romance of beauty, and the child's heart is full of love from its birth. Now the pale reality broke upon her, but she felt that her love had been a generous love—so she wept.

Women are so unselfish, that the very recollection of the immensity of their sacrifice for one they have loved comforts them. Luttrell had left the room when she appeared slightly tranquillised. He did not understand that she was only worn out; but this comfort arising from the sense of self-sacrifice did not last long; after a little time, as she lay there, the night of the soul, black, melancholy, and profound, fell upon her, so that she could not even calculate or recall the magnitude of her grief.

It was but slowly, like the progress of decay; her memories withered, like autumn leaves, discoloured as the newly dead, arose in her heart—the enchanting visions of a future, now, alas! never to be hers, which yet but two hours since she imagined that she possessed, had fled from her. Then passed by decked in garlands and wreaths the hours of passionate enjoyments; but as they passed, she perceived that the flowers of which the garlands were composed had faded away. Her grief forgot nothing; the very echoes of joyous sound, the perfume of the smallest flower, the

lightest whisper of earliest love—everything swept across her heart. She seemed to see the mother, who had pressed her to her bosom; the father, whose aged steps she had tended; the friend, on whose confidence she had reposed. Luttrell had left the taper in her room, but it was gradually dying away. Of a sudden she heard the house-door close—he had gone; and at the same moment the light went out, and she was in total darkness; but the darkness of midnight hours was not so intense as the darkness which fell upon her soul. But at least the darkness concealed the bitter mockery of damask lace, silver service, and gilt mirrors. It seemed as though she could give free course to her grief, when she was left, like the lost one of old, in a solitude of terror.

And Luttrell, why had he left the house at that hour, and without bidding her farewell?

He was not so utterly heartless as not to feel most acutely the state to which he had reduced poor Marie. The agony that wrung his heart compelled him to leave the bedroom. He sat for some time in one of those costly chairs with which the rooms were crowded, when a sudden idea struck him; he had his mother's miniature set in diamonds; he could dispose of this; it was of immense value; he would go at once to a Jew, with whom he had many similar transactions, obtain a sum of money, and give it to Marie on the morrow, as the last proof of his regard. There was no time for delay, for the orders from the Horse Guards were imperative; besides, he knew that there were writs out against him, and that it would be very dangerous for him to leave the house in the morning.

He went to the drawer, and took the miniature, which was packed with the care bestowed on a sacred object; it was his mother at three-and-twenty, from whom he had inherited all her charms of grace and feature—but, alas! not her innocence. It was set in a valuable case, and encircled by diamonds of the purest water, which had been presented to her at one of the courts to which Lord Linton had been accredited. At the back of it was some of her hair. Alfred had not looked at it lately. He did not dare pollute that holy relic by touching it.

Oh, marvel of nature! when the world's opinion—when love in fairy guise—when the sense of honour—above all, when the voice of God appeals in vain to the heart of man, a mother's whisper is heard, and not in vain; and

it falls on the heart like summer dew. For this man, so diseased in mind, so world-worn, wept! yes, he wept as he looked on his mother's picture; the smile seemed so holy; and the voice, like the features, must have been so sweet and delicate; so ably was it drawn, it seemed to exhale the excellence of the spirit which it represented. For a moment Alfred paused. Could he part with this last legacy of his mother? could he sell those jewels which had become consecrated by the circumstance that they had been possessed by *her*, and which had encircled her portrait? He hesitated; he had almost resolved on replacing it whence he had taken it, when he heard the faint sobs of Marie in the other room, and that decided him. He put the miniature carefully in the box, placed it next his heart, threw a cloak around him, and with his hat slouching over his eyes, so as best to conceal his countenance, he issued from that house, to return to it but once again.

CHAPTER X.

It was a dark night; the carts laden with provisions from the country were beginning to rattle along Piccadilly, on their way to Covent Garden; breaking on the solitude and the slumber of the city, by their heavy lumbering roll. Commerce and speculation never sleep. Luttrell drew his cloak closely round him, for the night air was cold; besides, any pressure gives a man confidence when he is wretched and alone. Thus is it men, in thought or guilt, fold their arms or clasp their hands. He walked down Piccadilly, passed the narrow passage into Leicester Square, traversed that wretched district, and found himself in Cranbourne Alley. The passion, the excitement of the great city, seemed to be exhausted. The only persons he had met were two men straggling homeward, with dubious steps, and sundry deviations from the straight road, and a woman in squalid and miserable garb, who was talking at the corner of Sackville Street to a man of somewhat better appearance, who appeared to be wrangling with her; the man was almost silent, while the woman's imprecations were fearful.

When Luttrell arrived at the door of the money-lender's house, it occurred to him, for the first time, that he would have difficulty in arousing him at such an unusual hour; but when once a man is resolved on an object all difficulties vanish; and Luttrell knocked loudly at the door of the miserable building.

Cranbourne Alley has now been pulled down and replaced by a handsome street. At this period it was particularly frequented by Jews, broken usurers, porters, hell-keepers, and other equally respectable members of society. But low as they were in point of class, some of these men could command thousands of ready money; and they merely assumed the air of poverty, and resided in that wretched locality, to screen themselves from too curious observation. The *élite* of the *roués* were well acquainted with them, and negotiated with them in person. But in general they lent their money,—in some cases other people's money, the savings of servants, and even the accumulations of titled persons (who loved usury, and wished to combine it with respectability), through the medium of attorneys. Michel, to whom Luttrell was about to apply, was the best of the class in that neighbourhood, which, certainly, was not giving him very high praise.

He had a daughter, black-eyed, and with all the characteristics of her race, who was an occasional attraction to Luttrell and others. The old man found her very useful in many ways. She kept men in good humour; laughed them out of their interests in the little back-parlour, which looked into a drying-yard, and was redolent of smoke; this back parlour was not a very uncommon lounge for the middle class of vulgar men about town, young medical students who indulge in clever practical jokes as you walk through the hospitals, the shopmen of the best tradesmen, the lower order of clerks in all professions;—they thought it an excellent lark to go and chat with Sarah, and make the house a divan. There was some jealousy even about her favour and good will, which she turned to admirable account.

After knocking a considerable time, and swearing almost as loudly, Luttrell caught a glimpse of a light, and heard the shuffling of feet in slippers; presently the handle was turned, and the door opened to the extent of the guard-chain.

"Who's that?" asked a voice, which Luttrell recognised as Sarah's.

"Luttrell; you know me, Sarah," he answered, very rapidly; "come, don't be all night opening the door. I have something very particular to show the old man, and can't stand here; besides, it's devilish cold."

"I dare say it is," replied Sarah, "and it's, as you say, devilish cold to call me out of my warm bed. You don't think the old man

is going to get up in the middle of the night, for you or any one?"

"Come, will you open the door? or I will knock up the whole street;" and, true to his word, Luttrell gave a thundering rap at the door; but Sarah still kept the chain fastened, and did not seem at all inclined to undo it.

"Come, my gentleman, I shall have to take you to the station-house, if you make this row at night," said a policeman, coming up; "you see, sir, as how you have disturbed all the street."

It was quite true, for there were two or three heads put out of windows enveloped in the strangest head-dresses, who vented their imprecations on Luttrell.

"I say, young chap," exclaimed one, "I shall give you in charge to that 'ere policeman. Dang it, have you nothing better to do than to alarm a whole town at this time of morning? Come, policeman, do your duty; knab him. I gives him in charge. Do you hear?"

But the policeman did not hear; for the simplest of all reasons, that Luttrell had slipped a sovereign into his hand. After a mild remonstrance, and praying Luttrell to go home quietly, A No. 1 walked on.

"So you won't take him in charge," cried the choleric gentleman, who had expressed himself so amiably towards Luttrell; "very well, then, I will report you, policeman. I will write to the Commissioners to-morrow morning. It is a cursed shame. As for the house, I will have it indicted as a disorderly house, which it certainly is. You have not heard the last of this; no, that you have not," he roared, at the top of his voice, for the policeman was almost out of hearing, walking away with the measured step of most perfect indifference.

"Come," said Luttrell, "you hear what a cursed row you are causing, Sarah. Open the door, there's a good girl, and here's a sugar-plum for you," and he threw a couple of sovereigns on the floor.

It was an irresistible appeal, and the door was opened, and carefully closed after Luttrell had entered. The woman was really handsome; but she was dressed in a dirty white wrapper; an India silk handkerchief was fastened round her head. There was something haughty in the eye, and the dark shade of the upper lip. You could not mistake her blood; the most casual observer would have discovered her to be of the lofty, exclusive, and chosen race.

Luttrell was shown into the little back-parlour we have spoken of; the tallow candle, left flaring on the table, while Sarah went for the old man, threw a sad light over the sordid smoke-stained room. On a shelf were heaps of papers, ranged in something like order, and Luttrell saw his own name scrawled on the back of a bundle of old letters. The furniture was composed of wretched materials; a horse-hair sofa, half-a-dozen chairs, and a large square table, covered by a cloth which had once been blue, but the colour was disguised by grease and porter-stains. Luttrell shuddered at the contrast between the apartment he had left and this reeking abode—between Marie and Sarah.

It was some time before Michel would make his appearance; and before he did so, Luttrell could hear him cursing and growling as he stumbled down the crazy stairs, in spite of the exhortations to caution which Sarah gave him.

He was a man well stricken in years; he had thrown a loose kind of slate-coloured easy coat over his shoulders; his shrivelled feet were lost in a pair of dingy yellow slippers; the face was thin, cunning, and cautious; the hair very scant and grey; and he wore a short beard, to avoid the trouble of shaving. It was evident that even the rest of his face was only washed on festal days. The hands resembled meagre, skinny, dried pieces of parchment; the nails were colourless, and twisted like claws. His neck was lean, so that you might almost trace his words in his throat. His whole costume consisted of this loose coat and a pair of ragged trousers; altogether, he was about the last person you would have given the credit of possessing a spare five pounds, and yet he was a man who commanded thousands.

"Very pretty, very pretty, Mr. Luttrell; you young gentlemen, it seems, cannot be fast enough for the age," he exclaimed, as he entered the room, "bringing the police about my door, damaging my respectability. Come, never mind, sit down; what is it you want? A few pounds to have a throw to-night?"

"I will tell you what I require at once, old Michel," said Luttrell, "to save all your confounded twaddle, and send you back to bed. Look here, I want money for this setting;" and he put the paper containing the miniature into Michel's hand. The old man leisurely and deliberately undid the covers: when he touched the miniature, Luttrell's face grew deadly pale, for it was the first time a profane

finger had come near it. Even at that moment he was disposed to recede.

Michel's eyes brightened when he beheld the brilliants. In one short moment he had calculated their value, and the amount of his profit.

"Come now, be quick," said Luttrell, impatiently. "What will you give?"

Michel named a sum one-third of their value.

"You are a rascal, Michel!" exclaimed Luttrell, really incensed. "You are a rascal to offer me such a sum. You know their value, you old hypocrite."

"And I know the value of money to you, Mr. Luttrell. You require the money, I suppose, to-night?"

"Of course I do; what the deuce else should I come here for?"

"Now be quiet, be quiet, Mr. Luttrell, don't get in a passion," said Michel, retreating from him, for Luttrell appeared disposed to snatch the miniature from his hand; "we will talk the little matter over. If I say a larger sum, will you take half the money now, and the rest in a bill?"

"You are a fool, Michel, an old fool," was the civil rejoinder; "I want the money now, I tell you, at this very moment; what's the use of your bill to me?"

Luttrell had entirely forgotten his position, but the old man did not; his eyes glistened, and his hand trembled as he replied,

"I don't know, Mr. Luttrell, what use my bill may be to you, but I only hope it will be of greater value than your last bill was to me;—here it is," and after sorting for a few moments among the papers which bore Luttrell's name, he showed it to him dishonoured.

"Well, these things will happen, old fellow," said Luttrell.

"I know they will happen among you sparkling young noblemen," said Michel; all the men who dealt with him were noblemen until they levanted; then they were perjurers and swindlers. "I only wished to show you, Mr. Luttrell, that you ought to be civil to me; but to come to the point."

"Exactly what I wish," said Luttrell.

"Pshaw! I want to be off; this room makes me sick."

If Luttrell had observed Michel's face, he would have been careful not to have offended him; but he was thinking of everything else, and treated him as a money-lender; he did not observe that Michel still kept the old bill in his hand.

"It's not the first time, Mr. Luttrell, I have been honoured with ladies' society here, and ladies just as pretty as this, and they were not sickened at my room." As he spoke, he turned the portrait round in a disparaging manner.

"Look here, Michel," said Luttrell; "as for giving me the money, that you will do as you like about; but, by God, if you speak in a disparaging manner of that lady, I will throttle you, you old scoundrel."

Michel trembled, and appeared to be looking down at the floor; but he was only looking under his eyes at Luttrell with irreconcilable hatred.

"Well, it must be so, Mr. Luttrell," said Michel, after a pause; "you have such a winning way with you, it is quite impossible to disappoint you. I will give you a hundred more than we said, and we will close the bargain."

"After all, you are a good fellow," answered Alfred, somewhat softened; "but pray be quick, for I am in a terrible hurry."

"I will go and procure the money at once," said the old scoundrel, and he left the room.

He had taken the diamonds with him, and laid the miniature on the table. Alfred took it up, and again he repented him of the deed; there was something revolting in the notion of selling the setting of his mother's picture on such a night, in such a cause, and to such a man. He took the miniature up, and again he placed it next his heart; if his mother could have seen the action, however guilty he might have been in other respects, she would have forgiven him for this action; at that moment Michel returned with the gold.

It was a large sum, and it looked larger; he never kept notes; it was a rule of caution with him, for notes might be traced; but there was the gold, in two bags, and Luttrell signed a receipt.

"Sarah, show the young nobleman the door," exclaimed Michel, as Luttrell was leaving; "there, take care, my dear sir; one step, then straight on—there are no more steps, only a mat at the door; don't tumble over it, my dear sir—good night, good night;" and Michel and Sarah retired.

CHAPTER XI.

HE had done the deed; the door was locked; the step he had taken was irrevocable; it was a satisfaction to feel the money in his pocket. He prided himself on having per-

formed a very unselfish action. We will not take the trouble to analyse whether or not it was entirely so—let him have the credit of it; like all men who endeavour to evade very painful feelings by action, they came upon him again with unconstrained force now that the action was over, and he knew the precise limit of benefit which he could confer on Marie. After all, he had received but a small sum, and it was not the least of his disagreeable feelings to know that Michel had most grievously cheated him in the transaction; “however, it’s one consolation,” thought Luttrell, “to know that I have done him in that bill affair. He will see deuced little of that money, I can tell him.” Whether Michel would have seen it under any circumstances, is a matter not worth discussing now.

While Luttrell was engrossed in these meditations he was standing at the end of the alley where it joins Leicester Square. The fact is, that his nerves were entirely unstrung, and he dreaded a renewal of the scene with Marie. The bravest men are cowards in these matters; and there is nothing which a man of the world dislikes so much as a scene. To have avoided this, he would have suffered a good deal; for, let us do him justice, to have provided suitably for Marie, Luttrell was capable of making some slight efforts of self-denial; at least he thought so at this moment; but men differ so much as to what self-denial is. He at one time would have considered it an effort to put down his cab, or part with a favourite horse. He did not understand that there is no self-denial worth speaking of, so long as a man possesses the luxuries, the comforts, or even the necessities of life; unless it be that unostentatious self-denial which is practised in the daily intercourse of life; the self-denial of temper, of taste, of affection, which prevents the expression of the one, circumscribes the fancies of the second, and, most difficult of all, limits the demonstrations of the last. Luttrell would have thought any one mad who spoke to him in this strain.

As he was leaning against the lamp-post in this most unenviable frame of mind, he heard a door open and close, and, to his great astonishment, he saw a figure glide from the house he had just left, cross the alley, and disappear through the narrow lane which joined it. At first he thought that he could distinguish Michel’s face; but he soon persuaded himself that this must be a mistake; what could Michel be doing out at this time of

night? No; it must have been one of Sarah’s numerous suitors, and he thought no more about the matter.

He sauntered along so slowly that an hour must have elapsed from the time he left Cranbourne Alley until he arrived at his house. The street was as still as when he had left it; the wind was cold, and a few heavy drops of rain splashed on the pavement, foreboding a storm; but for this rain he would probably have stopped some time longer to strengthen his nerves before meeting Marie; but the coming storm compelled him to decide quickly. The latch-key was in the door, when he felt a tap on his shoulder. He started round; his first impulse was to strike out with all his force, and he obeyed it; the blow fell heavily on a man’s cheek.

“Come, I say, my hearty,” exclaimed the man, who Luttrell could see by the lamp-light was strong and heavily framed; “I say, my cove, you have given me a nice black eye in return for the gentlest tap that ever an hoficer applied to a gemman’s shoulder.”

“Who the devil are you, and what do you want?”

“I have only a little bit of paper, which you must satisfy, or walk off with me; unless such a knob chooses to wait for his carriage.”

“It was true enough, it was a bailiff. Luttrell knew too well to resist; he apologised to the man, putting a couple of sovereigns in his hand, and induced him to walk in to talk the matter over. His heart sickened at the prospect before him.

“You knobs has such a way with you,” said the bailiff, pacified; “you thinks no more of knocking down a bailiff as tho’ he warn’t a Christian, and a public fictionary. Howsumever, if you has a glass of summut, I will step in and see what can be done; but you don’t get away, you must promise me that.”

“I do,” said Luttrell, “upon my honour.”

“Then we will be on what the Frenchified fellows calls patrol,” answered the really good-natured fellow.

When they entered the dining-room, Luttrell lit a candle. The man looked round, astonished at the elegance of the furniture; he involuntarily took off his hat, smoothed down his hair: “I begspardon, my lord,” said he, with infinitely increased respect, “but this is summut like.”

Luttrell had steeled his mind to much, but his cheek was very pale. “Sit down, my

man," he said. "Now, what is the amount of the debt, and at whose suit?"

"The debt is a mere trifle for sich as you," he replied, drawing forth the scrap of paper; "it is 400*l.*, at the suit of Adam Michel."

"Of who?" almost shrieked Luttrell, all his self-possession vanishing.

"Adam Michel, my lord," repeated the man, pushing his chair away, for he evidently expected another ebullition of temper; "you sees as how that Michel has had the thing ready for some time. Well, he calls on me just now, and wakes missus, and says he must see me; tells me he will give me five pound if I will get up and knab a gemman before he gets home. I takes the five pound, runs hard, as you see, just gets here before you, and does my duty, as how you perceive, in a civil agreeable manner."

"Monstrous blackguard!" ejaculated Luttrell.

"Blackguard! Civil words, my lord," said the bailiff. "I am no blackguard; just an honest hoperative."

"No, my good fellow," replied Luttrell, in a broken-hearted voice, "I was speaking of Michel, not of you."

"All right, my lord! Blackguard that old Jew as much as you like; I will join chorus."

Four hundred pounds. Michel had given him four hundred and fifty. There was no option; he must give it, or be shut up. In this moment of doubt and tribulation, he really had consideration for poor Marie; he thought whether she would not suffer more from his absence, without taking leave of her, than by the loss of the money; and for once he judged rightly. So, with a heavy broken heart, he took out the rouleaux of gold, and placed them in the man's hand.

Even the man was touched by the expression of grief, and endeavoured to console him.

"Never mind, sir, there be ups and downs in life; sometimes we be's on the ground-floor, sometimes in the sky-parlour. Take it easy; after all, you have a mountain of gold in this room. All this 'ere must have cost a power of money."

Luttrell, with a sigh, remembered how much it had cost him; he waved his hand impatiently, as the man seemed still disposed to linger in the room, so he buttoned up the pockets which contained the gold, scraped his feet, and retired.

Then Luttrell sat down. After all, he had but fifty pounds left for poor Marie; and he had sold his mother's legacy, and been effec-

tually outwitted by that cunning old man. What curses he heaped upon him! If he had him there at that moment, he certainly would have choked him. Indeed, he was on the very eve of going off to his house with the most revengeful purpose, when a sudden faintness seized him; he flung himself on the sofa, and slept.

At that moment, Marie had risen from her bed, and was kneeling in her oratory before the cross, which we have described as being of simple wood; but she remembered that the cross was made of wood—the cross that saved the world.

So two men of nearly the same age, both in early youth, both, from their birth, of the higher class of society, with the same care bestowed upon their education, both of whom had possessed a mother's love, whose cradles had been equally cherished by affection, and who had been fostered by kind and gentle words; two men, Ernest Vane and Alfred Luttrell, have been presented to the reader; by what strange accident does it chance that these two men, so similar in the habits of their early life, should grow up so different in their tendencies? and, stranger accident still, that so opposite in character, with pursuits so greatly at variance, with opinions so diverse, they should find their interests, their careers, clash together? We might marvel at the incident, if it were not ever thus; that summer and winter, night and morning, are ever succeeding each other; that there are two principles rooted in the world, which are sown and reaped at the same time; the principle of good, and the principle of evil—Ormud and Ahriman—the power of light, and the power of darkness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE days flew by at Castle Melwood, as happy days ever will, with inconceivable rapidity; every morning some party of pleasure was arranged. Both Mr. Leslie and Ernest Vane were respectively pleased that Ida and Algitha had found companions suited to them; the friendship of those two was, as friendships ever are between young ladies of the same age, quite enthusiastic. In about three weeks a stranger would have believed that they had known each other for as many years. They had no secrets from each other; or, rather, they had no secrets to tell. Only those vague imaginings, those fallacious but graceful hopes of young girls, which are cherished in secret, and only communicated

to some particular one. And yet Algitha's wayward temper was a source of occasional disappointment to Ida, and of real concern to Ernest; her will was so strong that no restraint could check its expression, or advice control her. It was sufficient for her to wish a thing, to be unhappy if she did not attain it. It is true that it was quite impossible to be long angry with her, she was so pleasingly mischievous—her passionate eagerness was so gracefully expressed; but this made the matter worse; for once compelled to laugh at her waywardness, all control was at an end.

Ernest sometimes lost his temper; but this only gave occasion for a burst of laughter, in which he was compelled to join. Yet there were occasions in which he really grew very grave, and spoke harshly to Algitha; her eyes would then fill with tears, and she would throw her arms round his neck, embracing him affectionately. On both sides, these little episodes in the joyous tenor of their lives were soon forgotten; in short, she led as happy a life as a young girl well can; and to lead a happy life is generally considered a matter of principal moment.

She was just the same age as Marie.

Ernest had commenced at first by declining these repeated invitations to the castle. If he had been asked why he did so, he would have found it very difficult to explain his reasons. Probably there was something in the feeling that he was unable to return Mr. Leslie's civility, by inviting him, in his turn, to Wimbourne. He saw the absurdity of asking a man residing in a large castle, and surrounded with all the appurtenances of wealth, to a small cottage, situated three or four miles distant. It was therefore only when he found that Algitha so greatly missed Ida's society, and really became moping and unhappy, that he reproached himself with his seclusion, and yielded to the courtesy which was shown him. There might have been another secret reason for his change of purpose; but he did not dare own this to himself. His thoughts were constantly fixed on Ida; but with all his poetry, Ernest Vane was a man of consideration; like all men who reflect much, he was a quick judge of character; and he could detect in Mr. Leslie's nature that ambition, that latent vanity, which he felt would throw great obstacles in the way of a happy union between the families, even if Ida's affections were enlisted in his favour. Under these circumstances, he resolved to avoid the temptation, the painful occupation of his heart, and the

consequent disappointment, to which he knew he should be exposing himself; and yet, in spite of this determination, he found himself unhappy and melancholy whenever a day passed without his having seen Ida.

He used to walk out on the terrace in the evening, and look at the sun as it set, red and glaring, behind the oak-covered hill; there he loved to meditate on every word that had fallen from her lips, and give full rein to that most dangerous of all gifts—Imagination. He possessed all the feelings, all the anxieties, all the refinements of passion, even before he knew that he was at all in love. He endeavoured to guard himself, for some time, against that confidential intercourse; those silent looks, those indirect avowals, which are, in general, the elements out of which love is composed. His love continued, as it commenced, for some time, to be entirely a work of the imagination; the atmosphere which he breathed, the bright sun, the season of the year, all fed it. If he mounted his horse and galloped far away from the castle, and in an opposite direction, still in his imagination he saw Ida; and in the murmurs of the twilight he heard her voice. Every reader will, from the first, have exclaimed, "we know the whole tale; Ernest Vane must fall in love with Ida!" Yes! and every one who, in real life, had seen them together, would have said the same; it was well that it should be so; for love, like the garland of flowers which beauty wears, adorns even the most lovely. It calls forth the energies of the manly, as the spring produces a fresh growth of green hopes. Is it not, therefore, a certain result, that if the young and beautiful and nobly endowed meet, their hearts must beat in sympathy? And so the reader is right that Ernest Vane did love Ida; not that in voice, look, or gesture, he betrayed his feelings, but she became an inseparable part of his mind; wherever he went, her image filled a space in his heart.

In the silence of the night, he thought he could hear her voice repeating all that she had said in the course of the day; on his knees, and in his prayers, his thoughts, when he blessed all who were dear to him, reverted to her. If he had painted the Madonna, he would have conveyed the features of Ida to the canvas. Such was his love; the love of the enthusiast nurtured in solitude. Taught in early life to sound the depths of the mystery of the human heart, and the infinite beauty of God's works, it was a love which,

in the world, many would have despised; for it in no way esteemed or calculated the immense heritage which the possession of Ida's affection would bestow upon him. He loved as the few do, and as the few only will understand. It was his greatest enjoyment, after having been a short time in her society, to retire to some shady spot, from which he could catch a distant glimpse of the castle, and there to pass away hours in the vainest but most joyous day-dreams.

Then it was that it could be fairly said that he loved her; had she been present, and he confessing his affection for her, it could not have been uttered in tenderer tones; happy moments, when, for the first time, all that his youth had imagined was being fulfilled—when the boy first hopes, ignorantly indeed, but gracefully hopes, in some retired spot, where no rude footsteps shall penetrate, to meet a fairy form, and take it home to his bosom; such hopes are too often realized in a form quite unworthy of the dreamer; but even then he endows it with the Promethean spark from his own heart, and to him it becomes fraught with beauty. Ernest possessed this incomparable blessing of fresh feelings associated with manhood—rare instance of the imaginations of earliest youth, accomplished when the feelings and passions are strongest. Oh! if those who call it pleasure to drink deep into the dissipation of the night—to cherish affections, of which they are themselves ashamed—to conceal themselves under a cloak, even in darkness—if they did but know, before it is too late, what are the joys possessed by a pure and simple heart, how beautiful are the feet of virtue, and how infinite in its capacity for love is the human soul, which has not been desolated by the hurricane of passion, they would envy those who have learnt to cleanse their way, and have preserved their purity of feeling.

For then concealment does not indicate the presence of shame, and the highest confidences, the confidences of the soul, are interchanged never to be broken. Then the heart becomes susceptible of the highest refinement, and with the love of a fellow-creature—the love of nature—the love of virtue, ay, even the love of God grows within us—every love except that of the world; when a virtuous affection fills the mind, then the pleasures of the world, its low ambition, its grovelling pursuits, affect it not, and men marvel how they ever cared for those pleasures which once engrossed all their existence. They

begin to think that a new world is opened to them—that to them, and to them alone, a revelation has been made; they then believe that the language of the poet, which was ever on their lips, and which they once considered extravagant and wild, now so ill expresses their feelings, that it is unworthy to be quoted by them. A pure affection is the surest guarantee of high moral improvement. A heart which the voice of the preacher cannot reach, which the fears, the anxieties of life cannot turn from evil to good, is subdued by the murmur of affection, and Mammon kneels before the shrine of the beautiful and innocent.

Is not this easy of explanation? Do we not see constantly that the people who are in the habit of associating together catch the same manners, the same views, almost even the same expression of countenance? Why not, then, the same admiration for the excellent and virtuous? Surely, if the evil can contaminate, the virtuous is powerful to bless; if hate can distort, love can transfigure and beautify!

Oh! supreme moments! when all our preceding life seems to have been enveloped in darkness, and God says, "Let it be light," and it is light, and at the word, the great design of life is displayed before us, and we begin to comprehend the power of eternity in possession of affections which we feel are infinite in their capacity.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was a very favourite spot where Ernest used to retire to meditate—it was a summer-house, at the end of one of those long dark beech avenues, which are the glory of our old English residences; formal, if you will; but still the very formality, the measured distances between the trees, leads to reflection, and to measured feelings.

On one side of this avenue, the bank sloped down into the bed of a stream called the Alder, and was covered with rhododendrons and laurels, and light and graceful plants; the summer-house itself overlooked what in the neighbourhood passed for a waterfall, but what an artist would scarcely have recognised as worthy of so dignified a name; although, at all events, he could not have denied that the water there formed a very pretty feature in the landscape, and, in a warm summer's evening, its gentle murmuring was, perhaps, more seductive than the roar and wild lashings of hoarser and more pretending cascades.

This stream was not wide ; and the opposite bank, which was steep and rocky, was crowned by the very small remains of an old abbey, knocked to pieces in the time of that arch-destroyer, Cromwell, the minister (not the Usurper). It was a very sequestered place, where the wild flowers clustered round the moss-grown rocks, where the eglantine and violet grew undisturbed. If man, in his hours of depression and seclusion, loves to wander amid ruins, and to sit in the noonday heat under the shelter of the fretted aisle, or broken column, Nature, too, in her perfection of youth and loveliness, beautifies such seclusion with every luxuriant grace. She twines her green and purple tendrils around the confused masses of marble, which testify at once to the capacity of man, who could chisel with such grace, and to the power of God, who can destroy the greatest works that man erects ; yes ! it is in retirement that what men call nature, that is, when the outward and visible sign of Heaven's infinite and marvellous goodness, speaks to the soul.

It is on a twilight eve, when one by one the stars peep forth like islands of light in a sea of purple, or when the east blushes at the hour of rest, and the approaching night appears in her dark mantle spangled with fire-flies, and the stream ripples, eddies, and froths, as it has eddied and frothed from earliest time, and will continue to do so until it leaps into eternity ; it is then that religion grows within the heart, and that even he who has hitherto believed learns more deeply to feel that which he believes ; and then indulging in imagination, let us add to all this harmony, grace, and mysterious beauty, the memory of the voice of love—the remembrance of never-to-be-forgotten words,—the pressure of a hand, the half confession of a new faith ; let us picture the young, poetic, and imaginative in such a glorious solitude, when he is alone, and yet not so, for, overleaping all time and space, there is another heart that responds to his ; for mountains may separate them, seas roll between them, but hearts united beat in sympathy for each other, through all the material obstacles which nature places in their way.

Is it not at such a moment that revelations are made to men ?—and one such revelation changes the whole current of a life. Are there any who have not passed through such moments of happiness ? If so, they are to be pitied, for they have allowed their youth to creep by without its greatest blessing ; they

have wandered through the land of flowers and beauty, without picking the one, or worshipping the other ; they have seen the crystal streams gushing near them, and have not stooped to drink of the waters, the very remembrance of which would have cooled their parched lips through the burden and heat of the day ; like ignorant travellers, full of materialistic thoughts, calculating the distances, endeavouring in their selfishness to avert future evils and difficulties, which, after all, they may, perhaps, never be called upon to combat, they have walked on, blind to all the charms which surrounded them—to the glory of the heavens, and the glory of the earth ; and when it is too late, when they have reached the eminence, and the next step, the first in life's descent, is to hide it from their view—oh ! then, what would they not give to tread the same road again, and to recover some of those flowers, which they perceive others cherishing in their bosom, albeit they fade and wither too soon.

CHAPTER XIV.

ERNEST was a great reader ; the summer-house alluded to in the last chapter was furnished with every variety of books ; but his principal study was works of the imagination. Algitha, wild as she was, frequently shared this solitude with him, and was happy in it ; at any rate, she seldom disturbed him ; with all her fanciful tricks, she greatly admired her brother. His chivalrous manner, the eloquence with which he at all times expressed himself, his enthusiasm for nature, attracted her sympathy. She frequently sat there for hours while he read to her, or they sketched some of the beautiful points of view which the winding stream presented. These were very simple amusements, it is true ; perhaps for that very reason they bore repeating so often.

Ernest was deeply touched by her affection, and by her entire submission to his will, whenever it was seriously expressed. He trembled for her in the world ; for he could not disguise from himself, that with an imagination so ardent, and a will so resolute, that none but himself could controul it—with affections so warm, that, like the sun's rays, they clarified and illuminated every object that came within their focus, her career was full of perils. He would have been happy if any eligible families had resided in the neighbourhood, so as to have initiated her into society ; but there were none but coarse coun-

try squires, and from an intercourse with these his refinement shrank. He even preferred living in this constant state of apprehensive affection, to endeavouring to promote such an acquaintance. Meanwhile, he tried all he could to train her mind to something like serious consideration, and to teach her young heart. He would with this view invite her to the summer-house, and indirectly put in her way books calculated to instruct her in the great truth, that the purpose of life is neither pleasure nor regret, but discipline, and above all discipline, the discipline of self-denial.

He would walk with her up the glen, and recite her some verses, in a cadence not less silvery than that of the waters bubbling near, calculated to rouse the drooping energies, and inspire a perishing heart. Carried away by his enthusiasm, he would continue, not perceiving that she had slipped away, and then turn round, and see her far down in the copse, with her bonnet off, scrambling from rock to rock in eager search after the wild rose.

One day, in the summer-house, all the windows were open, for the air was mild and balmy as that of southern Italy. Ernest was in a reverie, with his eyes eagerly fixed on the castle, the turrets of which were distinctly visible through the broken ground above the glen; Algitha was sketching the abbey, a sketch which she had attempted fifty times before, but which it so happened was never quite completed; she was far too impatient for an artist. She had made many ineffectual efforts to represent a monk, seated on one of the blocks of granite; but he was as resolute not to be painted; and the result was one of those bursts of impatience which used to make Ernest start from his seat and implore her mercy. On the present occasion, the brush was thrown down, with even more than usual energy; but Ernest made no remark. Was he asleep? Algitha looked round quite surprised at his unwonted silence. No—he was not asleep; but his cheek rested on his hand, and his eyes were steadily fixed in the direction of the castle.

The pen had fallen from his fingers, blotting the paper on which he had been writing; whatever his thoughts, they were evidently of intensity sufficient to pierce through the atmosphere and discover a vision beyond. That melancholy and thoughtful eye, that modelled mouth, now slightly compressed, as if to restrain the flood of feelings which had risen to his lips, the rich hair which floated over the delicately-shaped forehead, and that

hand, almost faulty from its feminine proportions; he was in that deep study of thought which a painter would have loved to paint, and a poet to describe—although both would have failed to do so adequately. Algitha herself was touched by its singular beauty; for the inspiration derived from some hidden influence was glowing in each lineament. For a long time she remained silently gazing upon it—at last, her natural disposition had its sway, and she rose, and stole behind him, and with a pen slightly touched his lips. What a dream she had disturbed—those dreams afterwards so fondly remembered and cherished!

Ernest started from his seat. “What is it?” he said; and then immediately recollecting where his thoughts had been, and in whose presence he was, the deep colour flew to his cheek, and he walked with hasty steps to the window.

“Ah, ah!” said Algitha; “you will meditate in that way when I am near you; by-the-by, I dare say that is the way you pass all your time when you deceive me by telling me that you are coming here to read. Now I know what you are about; and your chair, always placed opposite this window; yes, Ernest, I begin to see it all—there is no use denying it—I declare you are in love—in love with Ida. Capital—is it not? excellent fun!”

“Algitha!” said Ernest.

“No, no,” continued the laughing bright-eyed girl, “I won’t have any fine speeches. I have found something out—there is no use denying it; no, you shall not do so, Ernest;” and she put her hand over his lips as he was about to speak. “I will tell Ida all this when I see her in the afternoon.”

“No, Algitha, I beseech you, dear,” said he, in an almost imploring tone.

“Well, then, you shall tell me the truth. I will not speak to her if you tell me everything; but no half-confidences; if I find out I am not treated with perfect confidence, our compact is broken. And then—” and she continued with a more serious accent, as though a sudden thought seemed to strike her “why should it not be so? Now I come to think of it, what could be more natural and agreeable to every one, supposing Ida loved you? It would be the happiest marriage possible. You have family, which Mr. Leslie would give half his fortune to possess; and he has more money than any one can possibly require; whereas you have scarcely anything. And then I will tell you something; when I was riding with him and Ida last Sa-

turday, I was quite surprised at the number of questions he asked me about the extent of your property here, and in what directions it extended, and many other things. Among the rest, whether it was as strictly entailed as people generally said. I assured him on all these points, and he appeared rather dissatisfied with my replies. Now, if Ida married you, this property would belong to the family; and, although it is small, I am quite sure that the possession of it would gratify him more than anything else, as it is all that is required to make Castle Melwood quite complete. Well, it is really quite wonderful my having discovered all this," she said, after a pause; "and now I don't laugh at all, Ernest;" and she endeavoured to compose her face into something like a sedate expression.

She had touched a chord which vibrated through his whole frame—in her reckless manner she had made suggestions which gave a reality to his dreams that they had never before possessed. The thought had once or twice presented itself to his mind, but he had always banished it from him; but now, he felt that his secret was known; and although it had lost some of its charm by being discovered, still it was happiness to have one in whom he could confide; and, moreover, why should he deny an affection of which he had reason to be proud?

"Darling Algitha," said he, as he took her hand affectionately, "you have discovered my secret; but pray do not mention it lightly, and, oh, above all, let me entreat of you never to breathe a word to—to Ida. I can assure you that it would lead to my misery, and that would make you very unhappy, would it not, Algitha? As for what you say of the possibility of such an event, I dare not imagine it—I cannot blind myself to Mr. Leslie's character—to his natural ambition; to his pride in an only daughter, and to the anxiety of men of the highest rank, into whatever society she may be thrown, to seize so rich a prize, even if she did not possess all those qualities of mind, and that touching beauty which has won me. We are very happy now, dear Algitha; let us remain so. Any foolish remark, any idle jest, might lead to incalculable mischief. Do not precipitate events. As it is, I have nothing to reproach myself with. You observe how often I have denied myself the happiness of accompanying you on your excursions on some pretence or another; well, then, let us go on in the same way. You are very happy now. Why do

anything to break the charm? So you must promise me, Algitha, my own sister, to be silent."

The keenness of woman's perception is remarkable. Algitha saw how to reconcile her brother's real happiness and her own anxiety for the accomplishment of her projects, with his scruples which he called conscientious, but to which she would have applied the term Quixotic. "Well," she said, "Ernest, I will keep your secret, but only on one condition, that you do not avoid Ida as you have been doing lately. Very likely you are right in your idea that the marriage never can take place; but that is no reason why all the pleasure we might enjoy now should be spoilt by your very absurd notions; for they really are so, dear Ernest, only adapted to the year one, so entirely antiquated. We won't, then, talk about this any more; but do not let it interfere with our amusements. As for Ida, I can safely say that she is not in the least in love with you. This may not be flattering to your vanity, but it is the truth, and so you can set your conscience quite at rest."

Oh! Algitha! are you quite sure that you are speaking the truth?

Ernest, if not in any way convinced, was, for the moment, willing to be satisfied; he had received a great shock from the circumstance of that affection which he had so fondly cherished having become known to another. When an affection is pure and ardent, the first effect of such a discovery is to make a man ridicule himself; and if, in addition, an ironical voice sustains this feeling, the natural result is, for the moment, an entire revulsion of the heart.

Algitha had gained her point, and without giving her brother time to repent his promise, she pledged him immediately to many plans, which, in a more composed frame of mind, he would assuredly have declined; but Ernest, like all men of refined and classic intellects, was easily led by a woman.

"Here is a capital idea, Ernest," exclaimed Algitha, in a voice of delight; "you have always refused to ask the Leslies to come and stay with us, for reasons which I really appreciate, for I agree with you there would be something ridiculous in inviting the owner of such a castle to drive down three miles and dine at our cottage; but there is no reason whatever why we should not enjoy a kind of picnic here; dine early, and then they could drive back after dinner. I am

sure that Ida would delight in this. You know, although we have been there so often, that they have only seen the waterfall once, and that from the other side of the river; they have actually never been inside the summer-house. Now, I see you are going to object, Ernest; but you should remember that you have promised to be obedient to me, and it would be really so delightful! Then, if we liked it, we could renew the party. Now you agree to this, Ernest?"

"Why——"

"No, no, Ernest, this is too bad. You shall not start difficulties, and imagine the possibility of evil, when there is nothing but enjoyment in store for us; and then, remember, that in ten days I am to go to the Maxwells at Beaumaris, where I shall be bored to death. Oh, how sorry I shall be to leave you all, even for a month! so you must let me enjoy myself as much as I please now."

"You are a selfish girl," said Ernest, smiling, "to think so much of your own enjoyment; but I do remember that you are to leave us, dear Algitha, and, therefore, you shall be entire mistress here while you remain."

"That is delightful, kind, dear Ernest;" and without another word, she started off to write to Ida.

CHAPTER XV.

ERNEST was reading aloud to Ida and Algitha:

"It comes, the beautiful and free,
The crown of all humanity,
In silence and alone,
To seek the elected one.

It lifts the boughs, whose shadows deep
Are life's oblivion, the soul's sleep,
And kisses the closed eyes
Of him who slumbering lies.

No one is so accursed by fate,
No one so utterly desolate,
But some heart, though unknown,
Responds unto his own."

"These are beautiful lines," exclaimed Ida.

"They are, indeed," replied Ernest, not without hesitation, "an eloquent description of love.

"The crown of all humanity" is a singularly happy simile; they are written by Longfellow."

The party were sitting, not in the summer-house, but on a bank, which lay below it. Like all people who will a thing forcibly, Algitha

had succeeded in her plan, and it was now being carried into execution. It was yet early in the day, and, although only in the month of May, they sought some shade from the sun which poured from the bright clear heaven. The group was one happily so often seen; for, in general, those who form them are susceptible of all those influences of the flower-bearing earth, and the blue atmosphere of heaven, which are accessible alike to the poor and to the wealthy. If society, with its ranks, its privileges, its class appurtenances, separates interest from interest, and man from man, in the midst of the wondrous harmony of the summer night there is equality of enjoyment. The silken lovers, who speak in low whispers, breathing confidence, or sit in silent expansion of heart, with eyes half closed with inward felicity, are not more blessed by the mysterious light, the penetrating subtle odour of wild flowers at evening, by that breeze which is soft as the breath of angel's love, have hearts not more deeply fraught with beauty, gratitude, and hope, than the russet and homely pair, whom they pass by, seated on the mossy bank close to the bubbling stream; for these, too, also possess the abundant gifts of gratitude for the past, of love for the present, and hope for the future.

And this group—from the description of which we have digressed—was a happy one; for it was youthful, kind-hearted, and full of affectionate and loving thoughts, which, although unexpressed, still coloured all the conversation, and beautified every idea, as the perfume of flowers, even when they are compressed and concealed, impregnate the atmosphere. And then, although they did say, "what an enjoyable day!" "what a pity it should pass so quickly!" "when shall we meet so happily?" they still felt that they had many such days of enjoyment in store for them, and that they should often meet happily; so Ernest read, and Algitha, with a heap of bright leaves and brighter flowers by her side, wove coronals for her hair, or tied long chains of blossoms together, which she threw to Ida.

Ida sat there, affecting to work, but ever and anon looking stealthily into Ernest's face, when, with a deeper pathos and warmer enthusiasm, he read some passage which he felt expressed that secret of his heart he imagined to be so well concealed; then, with downcast eyes and a warmer glow on her cheek, she would listen with suppressed breath, and the light summer-dress rose and

fell with the heart that beat beneath it. Once when Ernest, forgetful of everything but the magic of the words he was reading, and the love which fired him, looked towards her, their eyes met, and her soft cheek was suffused with a warm tint, rich as the glow of an Athenian sunset.

They sat there for hours; and those hours passed but too quickly—for such is the penalty of happiness, that the more perfect it is in its character, the more rapid it is in its transit. It is thus that the logician arrives at the fact, that the greatest happiness is in anticipation; for, no sooner is the object of our search attained, than the contemplation of its loss presents itself to us. Men deceive themselves so lamentably with respect to time; it is not to be counted by hours and minutes, but by the variety and duration of sensations; for instance, five minutes of acute pain assumes the shape of hours; and, to all intents and purposes, they become so. Tell the child of anguish and privation that life is short, and she will reply to you that the hours linger in their path; that from morning to night, and night to morning, appears a hopeless eternity. Tell the child of light and love that life is a long space, and she will talk of a dream, soft and roseate as a summer's blossom, and not less fleeting. It is a melancholy fact, that youth, full of health, surrounded by love, and honour, and troops of friends, passes like a meteor, and that ever as we descend from the eminence the movement increases in rapidity, and the objects we are passing become daily more indistinct.

They sat there for hours. Not a sound except the unceasing murmuring of the stream, the slight rustling of the leaves when a timid fawn, more venturous than the herd, who had left the green pasture for the shady underwood, gazed on the party who had invaded its retreat. The birds, flitting from branch to bush, would hop near them to pick up some of the fragments of the slight repast. Sometimes a few dead leaves, those terrible monitors, which not winter's frost could entirely shake off, fell around them, pushed from the twigs by the new buds—sad emblems of all human life and decay—youth driving age before it. All around them was the universal harmony of May. The buzzing of myriads of insects; the humming of the bee; the burst of nature in its glorious growth, almost palpable to the senses; in the midst of which we feel it were sufficient happiness to dream away existence.

“Did you ever write poetry, Mr. Vane?” asked Ida, in a timid voice.

Ernest was about to answer with one of those denials to which no one attaches faith, but which are ever on the lips of men who respect their feelings, and the sanctity of their innermost thoughts, when Algitha interrupted him.

“He will deny it, Ida, of course; but I can assure you he does. Let me see;” and she sought for some time in her basket, until she found a scrap of poetry she had picked up on some occasion, and which Ernest had intended to have thrown away.

“Algitha,” said Ernest, with a warning manner. But nothing could stop the giddy girl; she began to read the verses in a mocking voice.

“Well,” said Ernest, “if they are to be read, at least let me do them what justice I can, for this is not fair.” And he repeated the flowing lines with earnestness. Perhaps, for the moment, there is no greater passion than a man possesses for the production of his intellect, for it is frequently the child of toil and mental suffering.

Love is a plant by jealous fancy sown,
Which is most delicate when fullest blown.
The bud waves gaily when the zephyrs sigh,
But once expanded, then the leaves will die;
The harp, full strung, awakes the richest sound,
Yet the strain'd chord oft breaks in the rebound.
The notes are sweetest when the lyre is strung
By some light finger; if the hand is flung
Too boldly o'er the chords, it makes us start;
But softer strains will penetrate the heart.
Love is a plant matured by hope and fear,
And lovers' quarrels but the more endear.
But when the young warm heart begins to swell,
Alas, how slight a word will break the spell;
One frigid glance, some little idle jest,
Although the lips belie the swelling breast—
Some measured tone, some long-forgotten strain,
Will send the heart's blood flying to the brain.
The false Italian wove the chamber scene,
And Leonatus doubted Imogene;
One mutter'd speech, one whisper half express'd,
And foul suspicion fill'd Othello's breast;
He wanted FAITH, and when his heart was tried,
He doubted once, and Desdemona died. (1)
Oh, grant us FAITH, for hard it is to trace
The minds of others, in life's rapid race;
Much in this world must linger unexplain'd:
Love is not always false, or passion feign'd.
To change the heart the slightest signs have power,
A word, a glance, a picture, or a flower.
Full many a heart prejudging has been lost,
And want of FAITH has left it tempest-toss'd:
'Tis ours to trust, believe a Power above,
And place our FAITH where we have placed our
love.

He had forgotten the work was his own,

(1) From “Meditations of other Days.”

and, when he had finished, exclaimed, "Oh yes, it is faith which we require!"

Ida's head had sunk upon her bosom, and her arms hung listlessly by her side, even Algitha was silent, for there is something in the language of the heart that commands respect, and overrules all ridicule.

"Yes, it is faith," he continued, "that is wanting to our happiness. Faith in the excellence of others, in our own faculties, in the providence which regulates the future. It is want of faith which prevents men proclaiming great truths in the face of day, and leaving behind them the imperishable monuments of great works. How many men pass all their lives in doubts! They have not made up their minds upon the intentions of existence before it has almost swept by them! They go on ever stumbling, because they cannot decide from what stream they will drink; they doubt the truth and affection which might have crowned their existence with happiness and glory; like a dream that has been dreamt, as unreal and impalpable, so their lives pass. They doubt the efficacy of great and good works, so they do not perform them; of great and good words, so they never proclaim them. It is through faith, and through faith alone, that a man leaves the region of good intentions to be up and doing, that he learns to

"Trust no future, however pleasant,
To let the dead bury the dead.
To act, 'act' in the living present,
Heart within and God overhead."

All this a man does through faith. "I do not," he continued, checking himself, "speak of that great faith before which every head is bowed, and every knee is bent, but of faith in the daily transactions of life, in the manly duty, in these constant obligations which the world never sees; but which are frequently so difficult of fulfilment. This is the faith which I allude to, and that which men require to possess, before they can hope to be great—faith in themselves."

And as he spoke, his whole presence indicated a spirit capable of great things; of the practice of the philosophy he was advocating.

He stopped, and, as the voice died away, the flow of the bubbling water, the rustling of the branches, and the fall of the dead leaves again recalled the group to the place where they were sitting.

It is a glorious thing to bring such a light to the eyes of one we love, as Ernest called

up to Ida's. As Stirling has beautifully written,

"There is one thing does all eclipse,
And this shall be my prize,
To see my thoughts move ruby lips,
And light up glorious eyes."

But the day was flitting by. The golden brightness grew paler and paler, and the purple and orange of twilight usurped its place, the evening air grew cooler, and it was not without many regrets that the party prepared to break up.

Then there was the last question, always answered by Time, "When shall we meet again here?"

"I am afraid not so soon as we expected," said Ernest, "for we heard to-day from Lady Mary Maxwell, and she expects Algitha at Beaumaris next week. I am to take her and leave her there. When she returns the weather will be still warmer, and we shall be able to renew these picnics; meanwhile, we will write our names and the date on the bark of the tree."

He took out a pen-knife, and they each in turn scrawled their initials. They grew upon that tree long after, when one of those who wrote it that day had passed away.

"Have we no other vacant day before Algitha goes?" said Ida. "Let me see, to-morrow we are to ride to Cawthorn, the next day you come to us, to meet those country neighbours whom Algitha so much objects to. We will not have a picnic with them. I am sure we shall not feel so happy and at our ease."

"No, no, by no means," exclaimed Algitha.

"Well, all we can do is to remember the spot we have selected, and show our gratitude by returning here on the first opportunity," said Ernest. "Now let us build up a little monument of turf and leaves, to commemorate the occasion."

And like children they rooted up the violets, the blue-bell, and wild heather, and the most luxuriant mosses, which they shaped into a small mound, and then strewed upon it the blossom of the acacia, the rhododendron, and the wild rose.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE morning of Algitha's departure arrived. Formerly she had looked forward rather with pleasure to this annual visit, for, compared with the village of Melwood, Beaumaris was quite a metropolis, and the neighbouring

Bangor the scene of the wildest festivity ; for there were county balls, race balls, regatta balls, stewards' balls, lady patroness's balls, in fact, balls in every variety of shape, and ever with the same eternal jingling band. Algitha was very fond of admiration, and she obtained it there, to her heart's content. The Maxwells were delighted and proud to have her with them, for wherever she went a buzz of approbation welcomed her. Ernest, who had passed one season with her, remembered this, and was not wholly without alarm for Algitha's disposition. He knew that a love of admiration is the most dangerous quality which a woman can possess ; and that the utmost virtue, the strictest principle, are frequently but feeble barriers against the omnipotent power of vanity.

But then, like all persons who are full of affection for another, Ernest was inconsistent ; after having frequently deeply considered, for hours together, the peril to which his darling sister was likely to be exposed, if all her foolish, girlish, wishes were immediately gratified, he was the first to go out of the way to anticipate them, and thus, at parting from her at Beaumaris, he turned towards her fondly, and told her that he hoped she would amuse herself as much as possible, while only a few moments before he had, in his own heart, regretted the list of gaieties which Lady Mary had enumerated in her last letter.

Algitha had not parted from Ida without many regrets, and innumerable pledges of constant correspondence ; they were only to be separated by ninety miles ; but ninety miles to friends who part for the first time appears an immense distance ; besides it does place as effectual a barrier to meeting as ten times the space. Ernest thought that the journey had never appeared so long ; at any other time Algitha would have asked him the reason of his distraction ; but it was a proof that his feelings had grown deeper with time, for they imposed silence upon her, for she did not make any remark as he looked over the vessel's side absorbed in reverie, to the track of the water, and beyond the track of the water to the hills and woodland which separated him from all that he loved.

To some people, Beaumaris is a very favourite resort ; to us it has always seemed the most sluggish of watering-places ; the tide in the straits rises and falls languidly ; it is dull and uninteresting, there is wanting the freshness of the *αὔρα ποταμίας αὔρα*, "the

breeze, the sea breeze." At low water, the long brown-ribbed sand-banks appear above the level of the murky waves, at once the warning and the peril of the pleasure yachts of the district. To the left, the black Ormes Head, a rock as infamous as ever were the Acroceraunian of old, "*et infames scopulæ Acroceraunia*," looks down in majesty on the wrecks which have sunk in homage at its base.

In the far distance, hill upon hill, Pelion on Ossa, mist-crowned and robed in clouds, loom like the spectres of the mist. To the right, the black castle of Penhryn recalls the olden fabulous legends of the marble halls of the Preadamite sultans. In the narrow valley which separates the isle of Anglesey from the mainland, and where the hoarse tide rushes through the straits, the small town of Bangor, with its ancient cathedral, sleeps in not unpicturesque indolence ; the features of the whole landscape are bold, mysterious, and almost solemn ; but it is a scenery which rather oppresses than gratifies, and notwithstanding the pleasant villas which are thickly scattered in the neighbourhood of Beaumaris, the Isle of Anglesey is a spot which requires all the hospitality for which the neighbourhood is famous, to render it agreeable.

At the period we are describing, the prowess of this subscription band which we have already alluded to was tested to the utmost ; for a new regiment had arrived at Bangor, and every one thought it necessary to decorate their drawing-rooms with as many epaulettes and sword-knots as could be spared from the very arduous service on which the regiment was engaged. Lady Mary Maxwell had not been backward on the occasion ; her house was small, it is true. Mr. Maxwell, a very worthy, portly, consequential whist-player, with a competence, a lover of the good old-times, hated to be put out of the way, as he absurdly termed it, when the apartment he dignified by the name of his library was turned topsy turvy for the reception of the various fashions of cloaks deposited there on the occasion of great *soirées* ; but, "*Quid volo valde volo*," was Lady Mary's motto, and all these difficulties disappeared before her voluminous energy.

She had a daughter to introduce into the world, as much like the mother as youth can resemble age. The mother thought it a compliment when visitors told her this ; but, like the answer of the oracle to Maxentius, "*Illo die hostem Romanorum esse peritulum*," the

compliment admitted of two interpretations; of course Lady Mary accepted the most favourable one. Mr. Maxwell, whose father had been a tenant farmer, paid great respect to her, because she was an earl's daughter. He was never tired of the subject of her family, and apparently the artists of the day had become inspired by the beauty of its scions; for Mr. Maxwell had managed to collect at least two dozen of the portraits of the various members of her Ladyship's illustrious house, which ornamented his library. There was the present earl in his robes; the present earl when yet a commoner and member for the county; his uncle, a knight of the Bath; the countess, his mother; the family of nine honourable gentlemen and right honourable ladies in every variety of attitude, and most admirable, where all were admirable, three of Lady Mary herself.

Lady Mary availed herself of every occasion of alluding to "my brother, the present earl," and "my father, the late earl;" and, strange to say, it was a subject the neighbours rather liked; they put on faces of real concern, as they asked, for instance, "I hope the earl is recovering from his severe attack;" and when she replied, "I am sorry to say he does not write me good accounts of himself to-day," she would follow it up with a long passage from his letter. As for a new regiment arriving in the neighbourhood, and Lady Mary not giving a ball, it was quite out of the question, and, to use her own phrase, Algitha had the singular good fortune to arrive in time for it; but this piece of good luck Algitha was to pay for by many bitter tears; like many other accidents of fortune, there was a second side to the shield. Fortune too frequently resembles the opal, that precious stone which has been called at the same time "*la pierre d'Espérance et la pierre de Malheur.*"

Providence, which the ancients worshipped as Fate, and which we are so apt to designate as Fortune!—the wish that there may be some such a thing as chance in the affairs of this world, being father to the belief that it really exists. So, to cast from ourselves the blame of the consequences of our weaknesses, we are anxious to believe in a fatality which is to bear the burthen of all our errors. Who is there that shall dare to apply the term fortunate to any of the events which are passing around us? Can we pretend to say what may be the ultimate consequence of any action? Is there any event so insignificant that it does not form part of that long chain

of circumstances, ties, and incidents, which bind all human societies together; which unite the grave with the cradle, the past with the present? Oh, often Algitha thought of this in after-life; with bitter tears she recalled that hour when she was told that this ball was a fortunate event for her. Often, through the long night, while others slept, has she cursed the hour which brought her under that roof, which she entered with smiles, and left in silent heart-brokenness. When it was too late, Ernest might well ask himself, "Were these people precisely those best calculated to guide the steps of youth and beauty in the first intercourse with life?" There are tempers so cold and claybound, that in sunshine, in storm, in all the variety of seasons, they are equally inanimate and dull; and on these the varieties, the colouring, the poetry of life have no effect; like the reeds by the sluggish river side, they have no blossoms that can wither, no leaves doomed to perish by the world's premature frost; but the delicate, the graceful, the flower-bearing plants, must be fostered by a different hand, cherished with more affectionate care, and guarded from the world's contagion. Such a plant was Algitha. Alas, in the world, as in the prairies of the west, it too frequently happens that flowers of deep warm colour seem most to love the sandy soil!

In truth and in bitterness we may exclaim, Wherewithal shall a young heart cleanse its way, amid the difficulties which beset it? We bring up the young girl in what are called strong moral principles; she is taught that vice is hideous, and that the paths of virtue are pleasantness; she is told that the passions must be subdued; that in social life, in the domestic circle, in the daily and hourly affection, in occupation, she must seek for the sources of happiness; that the practice of religion elevates and beautifies the heart, as it did the glorious abbeys of old; and then, having taught the delicate and affectionate these great truths, at an age when the mind is most susceptible of every sweet influence, and the heart clings to every object of love, she is cast into the world, where every scene, every room, every amusement—nay, even every occupation, necessarily induces a train of thought which saps at the root of all the precepts that have been so sedulously inculcated; and then, when her senses have been excited, when the dazzling lights, the harmony of the gay melody, the subtle perfume of the choicest plants, the atmosphere of love which pervades

our town palaces, have bewildered her imagination, we marvel greatly if she returns home, in heart somewhat changed; and if in her dreams, thoughts, not without their beauty—for all that surrounds the young and happy must be beautiful—but thoughts, altogether unblest, visit her late-sought pillow! Our whole theory of education is based on one set of ideas, to which our practice is entirely opposed; and, if the poor girl, in the fulness of her imagination, wanders into error, then those who, for their own selfish vanity, pushed her into temptation, rise in indignation against her, and cast her forth upon the world, to seek for manna in that wilderness which encompasses her on all sides.

Luttrell had arrived at Bangor about a fortnight previously to Algitha's visit to Beaumaris.

To say that he did not at all regret Marie, would be unjust. We have before remarked that he regretted her as a man regrets any object of luxury; he had accustomed himself to her society, and then he had at Bangor no occupation except to meditate over the past. He was not at all a man to be satisfied with the conquests of a county town. When the other young officers were joking each other about the pastry-cook's daughter, with her long shining corkscrew ringlets, and her full-blown healthy waxen-doll countenance, he sat by in silent contempt, and with a suppressed sneer on his face; of course, his good looks, the vague rumours which had preceded him of his vagabond existence, and of what is called great success with women, constituted him an object of universal attention, and he certainly was not very popular with his brother officers.

"Don't think much of him, after all," said Melville, in the smoking-room, after mess, the first day of Luttrell's arrival.

"Gives himself confounded airs," responded Martial Grey.

"These London fellows swagger so cursedly," said Henry Marvel, who himself made a point of stalking down the street with his hat on one side of his head, staring impertinently at every respectable person he passed, and if possible frightening them off the pavement. But, in fact, it was generally agreed, from the major (who was a bluff iron-grey-headed man, and what they called a jolly fellow,) downwards, that Luttrell was a man to be shunned. As for Luttrell, he was perfectly indifferent to all their opinions, as he possessed a supreme contempt for the whole corps. He had a horse

there, and took long rides in the country; in fact, it was meeting him in one of his solitary excursions, that first gave Lady Mary Maxwell the anxiety to make his acquaintance, and, through him, the acquaintance of all his brother officers. In a word, after the first fortnight, he was fast becoming thoroughly *ennuyé* with his life.

Ennuyé, *blasé*, words so commonly used, and yet so forcible in their expression; for a man to say he is *blasé*, what is it but to say that he has not only lost all interest in himself, but even all interest in others; that he has not only lost all hope and confidence in his own destiny, but possesses no love, no interest in the destiny of any who surround him? Some use the phrase from mere affectation, for it is the cheapest of all sentiments which a man can assume, that of pretending to an entire pre-occupation of mind, a solitary growth, a supreme contempt for everything and every one; but with many it is really the voice of one crying in the wilderness; it is the voice of the wanderer who has fallen exhausted in a rugged solitude; who cannot believe that there are fresh green spots beyond his horizon, or that there is any heart which he can venture to press in confidence to his own.

Such was the condition of Luttrell; he had no resources in himself. The memory of his past life was not calculated to afford even to his mind the most agreeable recollections. As for Marie, he tried to drive her from his recollection; for the last letter which he received from her gave him a most painful account of her condition; all the furniture in the apartment had been seized for rent, and she herself was forced to take shelter in a wretched lodging, where the pittance which he doled forth was just able to maintain her. The letters would have broken some men's hearts, but Luttrell's was of much harder stuff.

"I am very young, *mon bien aimé*," she wrote, "to sink under the weight of mental misery. Youth is strong, we are told, but if you knew the poignant anguish I am suffering, you would doubt even my youth resisting its devastating effects."

"Oh! the bitter loneliness of the desolate soul—I remember one day in the Tyrol, that, wandering about with some of my friends, I lost my way among the mountains, and night came on, and the stern cold glaciers stood all around me in their spectre garments, and the solitude felt almost palpable to sense, and touched my heart with a frozen hand; well, so

I feel now. The solitude of this chamber oppresses me so that I sometimes cry aloud, and then the woman of the house, who is so rough and uncouth, comes up and speaks to me with harshness; and I have no friend in London, as you know, for you would never allow me to have any. I do not blame you, Alfred, at least I never blamed you then, for you told me that you were jealous of the least feeling of my soul, but now I am very dreary without a friend, and I know not which way to turn for help and hope. If I should be able to reach the Tyrol, I might kneel day and night at my father's grave, and pray God to — Oh, no! I dare never to pray God again; you know the gold cross I wear, which my good pastor gave me. He told me when in trouble and affliction to press it to my heart and I should be comforted. In my prosperity I never wore it, but I do press it to my bosom now, and I endeavour to believe myself comforted. But, Alfred, do not mistake me, I do not regret the luxury in which I have lived; I never cared for it, and, perhaps, you were right when you said that I did not sufficiently appreciate it. In this room there is no comfort, all the furniture is of the scantiest and commonest material. The windows look into a cold, damp, unhealthy court; but it is not on account of this change that I repine. No, I would welcome privation, I would sleep or stand all night at your door, if privation and suffering could ever unite me again to you; for, think how great must have been that love for which I sacrificed my home, my father, and my God."

His answer ran something in this strain:—

"You must not think me so hard-hearted as I appear. Believe me that I am quite unhappy about you, my dearest Marie. What villains those were to seize all the furniture; and excuse me for saying it, that you were very slow not to have sold some of it first. I have no doubt it was that scoundrel Dawley, he is the only fellow capable of such brutality. You know my position, how terribly I am situated; in giving you 100*l.* a-year, I am doing all in my power for you. You remember I advised your not leaving the Tyrol; as it is I really don't know what to say. I send you a cheque for 20*l.*, it is the last twenty pounds I have in the world at present," (that was true,) "but even postage is expensive, and so much writing is a luxury we must deny ourselves for the present, in the exhausted state of my finances."

Such was the man whom Lady Mary, when

she accidentally met one day, pronounced the handsomest man she had ever seen; and who, as Lord Linton's son, would be such an excellent match for her daughter.

Poor Lady Mary, little did she imagine the wide gulph which separated Luttrell from the early graces of her Mary! That the world in which he believed no more resembled the world which she beheld than a sun-lit scene resembles the same spot when shrouded in midnight.

Luttrell moved through society with his hand like the condemned in the Hall of Eblis, ever on his heart, which was in flames. Inflamed with vanity, with base passions, and foul purposes, and suffering from a sort of impenitent remorse, but he bore the agony with unblenched cheek, with composed look—no contraction of muscle betrayed his pain; a Borgia could not have vied with him in his audacity and courage; like the master spirit of evil, he would have boldly pronounced the words, "better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." And he it was whom Lady Mary imagined was overpowered by the beauty of her daughter, at the very moment when he was almost wholly unconscious of her presence in the carriage.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ball commenced, and, as it continued, grave doubts crossed poor Lady Mary's mind, whether she had not made a great mistake in inviting Algitha to Beaumaris. Luttrell, who in spite of the odium with which he was regarded by his brother officers, was at once pronounced the handsomest man in the room, never left Algitha's side, and the giddy happy girl was delighted at the distinction he conferred. She was simply dressed; but it was the simplicity the truly beautiful would have preferred, to the most abundant ornaments. The natural flowers of which her bouquet was composed were appropriately worn by her, who was emphatically a child of nature. It might have been said that her toilet had not been superintended by a superior hand, for the hair was unrestrained by all those ties and ligatures which Mariton and his disciples are so partial to. But, if there was little artistic skill displayed, the curls were not less silken and luxuriant, or their wave less worthy of the pencil of a Titian. The long dark locks fell over her snowy shoulders far down to her waist; it formed a pretty frame for the graceful picture, whose delicate colouring and beautiful features surpassed the productions

of that fancy which sometimes outworks nature; and then there were charms which no artist can supply; made up of smiles and dimples, and arch expressions, the witcheries of the young and beautiful.

Luttrell was quite startled when he entered the room; he had gone to the ball from a listless idle feeling, but with very little expectation of deriving much amusement from it. Something had been told him of a very beautiful niece of Lady Mary's, who was seen standing on the deck of the much-admired "Fire-Queen" yacht, as she swept by Bangor. But it had escaped his recollection; and now he saw one of those forms which men delight in picturing to their imagination, and which the coldest artist could not model from with unshaken nerve. To his practised eye, one glance told the whole story of her child-like innocence; soft as the bloom on her cheek, her ignorance of the world, her quick spirit, her pardonable vanity, her love of admiration, ay! and above all else, her admiration for himself. It was apparent the moment he approached her, for she was too unskilled in the world, and the world's practices, to conceal it. She was prepared to fall in love with him. She had within the last two or three days heard Lady Mary and her daughters talk of nothing but the handsome Mr. Luttrell.

London she had only once or twice merely passed through, and therefore the accounts of its society were to her like the tales of the Arabian Nights, and its ministers were marvellous to her as the fabled genii. Designing as Luttrell was, it would have been unjust to have denied him the merit, and, in some, it really is a merit, of a perfect manner; he was graceful in the least of his actions, apparently entirely unaffected, deferential in his address to ladies, and assuming a modesty of demeanour, which strangely belied his heart. He was, in fact, singularly prepossessing. To see him listening to the woman he loved, or affected to love, you might almost have marvelled how any one could be found to resist him. Algitha, in her ignorance, had expected to see him covered with chains, and all those variety of decorations, which the weakest of the inferior class style of dandies are apt to purchase; and she saw a person dressed in the strictest simplicity; remarkable in nothing, except the elegance of the manner of the wearer. She had pictured (for what young girl is there who does not picture to her excited fancy the appearance of any

man, into whose society she is to be thrown, and whom she has heard much commented on), she had pictured him with a bold, swaggering, and affected air, and she was struck, on the contrary, by his retiring manner; his self-possession and perfect calmness were tempered and relieved by a voice of peculiar softness and unusual delicacy. He danced once with her, in conformity with the usage of county balls, and then proposed that they should sit still and make their remarks. If he had said, and he remarked, he would have been nearer the truth; and when the remark happens to be occasioned by admiration and envy, who is there who does not like it?

It was quite impossible for Algitha not to see that her partner and herself excited those emotions in the crowd by whom they were surrounded. She looked occasionally at Luttrell to observe whether he was affected by the rapid under glances which were cast at him, and the whispers, not always of the softest voices, which he overheard; but never did man sitting on a throne seem more indifferent to homage. To him, all these people were so entirely beneath his notice that he did not give himself the least trouble to think of them; nor would he have walked across the room to ensure all their good opinions. To his fancy they were a mere set of automata, whose movements interested him about as little as the contortions of as many marionettes. All he thought of was Algitha; there was a certain naïveté about her that delighted him, and which refreshed his parched heart.

A full-blown girl, blushing like a peony, approached the spot where Algitha and Luttrell were seated; she was dressed in the most extravagant style of Caernarvon fashion, precisely after a picture in *La Belle Assemblée*, or *Le Petit Courrier des Dames*, with short, compact, thick-set ringlets, made closer by some oily process, and her face glowed with animation; she bore a bouquet, which it would have broken Jullien's heart to see, so inartistically arranged were the flowers—it was Mary Maxwell; she ran, or rather scrambled, up to Algitha, exclaiming in a loud voice,—

"Why, my dear, you don't dance at all?"

That terrible word "dear," when used by women, is like the bugle call of truce; it indicates past hatred, present alliance, and the probability of future hostility.

Algitha looked confused, and so beautiful in

her confusion, that Luttrell would not interfere to rescue her from her tormentor.

Young ladies of Miss Maxwell's stamp can never disguise their petty larceny feelings. These were written, at this instant, in her countenance. She would now have committed a decalogue of crime to be revenged on Algitha.

And for what cause?

For the greatest that some women can give another, for being younger, softer, and of a more excellent beauty. If Mary Maxwell had been really plain, and knew it, she would perhaps have sympathized with Algitha, and loved her; for extremes meet, and they who are once fully convinced that they have no power to inspire love are frequently attracted towards those who are more favoured. At any rate, the same envy and hatred would not have gnawed her heart, for it is an invariable rule, that all rivalry, of whatever nature it may be, the rivalry of rank, of wealth, of beauty, or of intellect, is ever greatest when the two parties are nearest to each other in the social scale. The man of moderate income does not trouble himself about the millionaire; he is too infinitely above him; he keeps all his envy and hatred for the person of slightly better fortune and appearance in the world. Nothing can exceed the jealousy of the woman of the world, of five-and-forty, for the companion of thirty-seven, but she pardons the bloom and success of twenty. The aspirant for office, and 1,200*l.* per annum, calumniates, vilifies, and inwardly curses the young lord of the Treasury, who has been preferred to him; but he will appreciate the appointments to the higher offices in the government.

Miss Mary Maxwell, until this year, had been recognised as the beauty, the bouncing, bold, good-natured, vulgar, soldier-loving, beauty of the district; what subalterns call a "devilish fine girl." Algitha was highly esteemed the last year, but since then she had developed into far more admirable loveliness, and Mary could not disguise from herself the wide gulph which now separated her from her cousin. She could not avoid overhearing all the remarks which were made as Algitha passed by with Luttrell; for if society abuses in secret, it only the more loudly praises beauty in the presence of others. And black hatred entered into this young girl's heart; not all the vulgar compliments of the dancing men, and country beaux, the epauletted heroes, could satisfy her; for she saw that their

eyes were ever wandering to the spot where the two were sitting, and she felt how superior Luttrell was to those men who surrounded her; and, therefore, it may readily be believed, that it was from no feeling of affection for Algitha, from no interest in her amusement, that she made the above-mentioned observation, "My dear, you don't dance at all?"

Who would believe it? that this question, so simple, so uninteresting, if it did not positively decide, assuredly precipitated Algitha's fate. In the midst of her cousin's confusion, Miss Maxwell continued, "Let me introduce Mr. Melvill to you."

It was strategy worthy of Radetzky, a diplomatic move that Talleyrand might have envied. By this she achieved two ends. She separated Algitha from Luttrell; and, as she would then be left quite alone, Luttrell, she thought, could not do less than ask her to dance.

Mr. Melvill bowed, and smiled with a smile which only rendered his countenance still more insipid. He dangled his red sash with one hand, and inserted his middle finger between the buttons of his tight-fitting coat, as he asked Algitha to dance, after the most approved manner of young officers in marching regiments.

For the first time, Luttrell's features were slightly disturbed. This young officer was one of those who most hated him, because he most deeply felt Luttrell's superiority. So Luttrell, without apparently moving his lips, leaned towards Algitha, and she heard the words, "Say no."

Was it vanity, or anxiety to show her power over Luttrell, or a spirit of independence, such as is sometimes for a moment exerted by most characters, however weak, only to ensure them hereafter a more hopeless bondage; but she turned round, and a smile of triumph illuminated her face as she rose and took Mr. Melvill's arm.

Luttrell uttered not a word; but if she could have seen that countenance, she would have trembled for the future, and guarded herself from its consequences. No Stygian Lake was blacker than that man's heart at that moment. He had been slighted in favour of a man whom he utterly despised; a fool, whom he could wither with a word, had been preferred to him, even after he had pronounced the word of injunction; still, ever master of that proud art of concealing his thoughts, after the first second he betrayed

no emotion. He did not follow Algitha's movements, but he knew that she was casting furtive glances at him; and, as a foul and stagnant pool can reflect a sun-gleam, a smile shone on his heart; once their eyes met, and she grew pale as the white camelias in her hair, and then he knew that girl was in his power; up to that time it had been a matter of perfect indifference to him whether or not he succeeded in obtaining her affections, but now he resolved to conquer her pride and trample her under foot.

For a short time, Mary Maxwell stood near him, in the hope that he would ask her to dance; but, as it was evident that he had quite forgotten her existence, it was fortunate for her *amour propre* that some one came up to relieve her from her awkward position.

Was Luttrell in love with Algitha?

Love! we will not so desecrate the word; for love is self-denying and long-suffering, and, like charity, it sanctifies and purifies the heart. Love! No, he could never love anything but himself; a Maillard in fiendish cruelty, he experienced enjoyment in adding fresh victims to his list, the Vampire of human innocence, the Satyr of human nature; and yet in outward form so excellent, in exterior so like the noblest of God's creatures.

Luttrell never for one moment lost sight of Algitha, yet so guarded was he in his manner, that she could not detect his observation. She felt herself perfectly wretched; her vanity was wounded; she overheard a voice say, "He soon got tired of her;" and she imagined that the allusion was directed to her, as, in truth, it was. Mary Maxwell, as she passed, gave her a look of triumph; and as the poor girl sat silent in the corner, some rude hand struck a few leaves from her perishing camelias. For the first time the vanity of human wishes filled her heart, when she felt that the pleasure of the evening had been as short-lived as the flower.

But she was in error again.

It was the very close of the ball; she had retired to a small conservatory; she turned suddenly round, and Luttrell stood by her, apparently on the point of taking his departure.

She could not refrain from saying, or rather whispering, for her heart rose to her throat and checked her, "I thought you were going away without saying good-bye to me, Mr. Luttrell."

He knew human nature well, he saw in a glance how far he could trample on her; that indifference towards a woman is a weapon which can only be made available in certain positions; he feared lest she might resent any fresh proof of coldness, or that the reflection of the night might banish him from her mind. She was so unskilled in life as really to imagine that he wished to shun her. It was time for him to admit that he had been offended.

"I might quote a French proverb, Miss Vane, to prove that I should rather be justified in applying this observation to your conduct; but I refrain from attacking you for your unkindness to me. I am, as you know, quite a stranger here, and my evening would have been more agreeably passed if you had not left me when you did."

Algitha stammered out some insignificant excuse.

It was not Luttrell's object to commence a discussion, at such a moment, and in such a place; so he interrupted her at once.

"My friends are waiting for me, Miss Vane, but an instant. Give me that flower;" and he pointed to one of the dying camelias.

She hesitated.

His eye glistened; his manner grew cold and threatening.

"There, then;" and she put it into his hand.

He raised it to his lips, with that grace which feeling should alone give, but which, alas! art can imitate.

"Good night!" he said earnestly. "I hear that you are coming to Bangor to the cathedral for morning service on Sunday. I will be there."

One glance, and he had gone,—timidly and anxiously she looked round; the rooms were vacant. She fled to her bed-room, and locked the door.

Now for the first time to this young heart a mystery had been revealed—a new world had been opened to her, which contained a treasure of which she had never known the existence; and this treasure, of boundless price, she was about to bestow on a stranger. Like the Peruvians, who, ignorant of the value of their gold and jewels, yielded them all to the first spoiler who planted his foot in the new world, in the innocence of her soul she gave her heart to Luttrell, and she prayed for him that night. Could a passion thus springing from a holy origin rush into error? Alas! whose life is there which does not com-

mence with prayer, with bended knees, and clasped supplicating hands? How many fountains, at their source, clear and sparkling as Artesia's, soon flow through decayed soils and catch the world's pollution!—and where is the prophet's voice to proclaim what soul shall live, and what soul shall perish?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Sunday to which Luttrell had alluded was the next day but one. Algitha did not fail to attend the service at the cathedral; Lady Mary and her cousin declined accompanying her, but her uncle took charge of her. Since Friday, neither the mother nor the daughter had spoken much to Algitha about the ball; the truth was, that the result of the night's festivity had bitterly annoyed them both—her cousin's vanity had been rudely mortified, and the mother sympathized with her daughter. Algitha had not observed this estrangement—her whole mind had been occupied by one idea; like Aaron's rod, it swallowed up all others. She had recalled every word Luttrell had said to her—the deep passion which he threw into his voice—the smile which he cast over the frozen surface of his heart, and which, like winter's sun, brought forth fruit to perish in the frost. Now suddenly, and as she fondly imagined by some providential agency, the dream of her youth was realized.

As a traveller, who, after having pursued a long monotonous journey, suddenly, at a turn of the road, finds himself in presence of a magnificent prospect, where all the hues of heaven, and earth's brightest colours, combine to bewilder his senses, and falls down in admiration at the glory of God's works, and lingers in the enchanted spot in an ecstasy of feeling—so felt Algitha; for she too had travelled through the monotony of life; and now the heaven of passion in its brilliant array—its startling magnificence—its wondrous contrasts, was revealed to her; and yet no shadow of impurity dimmed the brightness of her feeling. It might be supposed that, from the seeming rashness of her conduct, she was one of those on whom the virgin's zone sat lightly, but this was far from being the case; yet there are minds which, from a long course of mental preparation—from having dwelt in imagination on an object of affection—are won at the first moment; it is their ideal which they are in love with—it is merely the transfer of the idolatry from the ideal to the

living object. Algitha had been brought up with strong religious principles; until this day she had never entered a church except to pray and to pour forth her soul; but now there was one other god in her heart, besides that God whose worship she was about to celebrate.

When she first entered the cathedral she did not dare look around her; as the voice of truth fell on her ear, she could no longer deceive herself into a belief that it was a fit and proper place for her, while love was throbbing in her bosom. The swelling organ, the fretted roof, the solemn arch, the silent aisle, the dim religious light, the rays of prismatic colours which poured from the painted windows, from the vaulted dome to the base of each sculptured column; all these appealed to her heart, and devotion came upon her thirsty soul like heaven's dew. She fell upon her knees, and buried her head in her hands, but she could not pray; she must look round once, but once, for she felt his presence, and she did look round; then her eye met his. He had just entered, and that one look was the first toward evil; from that first look there was no retreating; fearful and solemn words of warning were spoken, and she heard them not. Tones of mercy in soft and beautiful melody gushed from choir to aisle, but they swept by her ear unnoticed and unrespected; the crowning goodness of love was preached, but she only caught the word and not the spirit of the preacher; and, when he talked of that love that passeth knowledge, her heart turned towards Luttrell, while he, the betrayer, was standing there perfectly indifferent to the ruin he was working, to the havoc he was creating, to the contest which was working in that poor child's mind, to the glorious light that was deserting her.

He now knew that she loved him; but if she misapprehended the meaning of the word love, as it was expounded that day, he did not less glaringly mistake the nature of the love that possessed her. But he did not prize her affections, even now when he knew they were entirely his own; he could not appreciate a woman's first love, which freshens the heart of the young and unworldly; he could not understand that the passage from the present to a future life is not less supreme than is the transition in a young girl's heart from indifference to love, from ignorance of her own feelings to the knowledge of her heart's secret.

When the service was ended, Luttrell ap-

proached Mr. Maxwell and Algitha ; the former had some communication to make to the bishop, and left them for a few minutes. Algitha and Luttrell walked on together.

Every eye was fixed upon them, for they were both remarkable for their appearance, but Algitha was wholly indifferent to the observation she attracted; when a passion has taken deep root in the heart, it loses all that nervous sensitiveness which first characterizes it ; the earliest blossoms are easily shaken in the breeze, but the later bud is hardier ; it is worthy of remembrance, that an absorbing passion sees nothing, hears nothing, save through the medium of the object that is loved, and heeds nothing except as it affects that object. Thus Algitha saw not the curious glances, the hurried steps anxious to pass her, and then the head quickly turned to catch a glimpse of her countenance ; but this soon annoyed Luttrell, for although such curiosity rather flattered his vanity, it interfered with his projects ; when he saw that a lane to the right would take them to the landing-place, where the boat was waiting, he said, " This way, this way ! we shall avoid these vulgar people who keep staring at us."—Algitha consented.

She grew pale—she could scarcely breathe—she was now alone with him, the blue sky over head ; the scent of the hawthorn and sweet briar almost oppressed her ; the echo of their own footsteps fell with such distinctness on her ear, that she started at the sound ; she waited for the word of affection which she knew would be pronounced. But there was something in this half revelation which excited him ; he saw her torture, and he felt that no word could increase his power, but it might diminish it.

At the end of the lane the main street joined it again. Luttrell was not aware of this circumstance, or he would not have allowed such moments to slip by (as he would have termed it) unimproved ; he almost cursed himself as he heard the sound of Mr. Maxwell's voice.

It was Algitha who spoke now. She remembered the scene of the Friday night, and from his silence thought that Luttrell was still offended. " Have you forgiven me, Mr. Luttrell ?" she said, in a low and plaintive voice.

" Not quite," he replied ; " but I will do so on one condition."

" What is it ?"

" That you swear never again to do any-

thing I tell you not to do ; that no one shall henceforth influence your conduct but myself. Swear they shall not."

" No, they shall not."

And the No that she uttered was not less emphatic than the No that he had whispered the night of the ball, when she proposed to dance with another. Its import was not less grave, and its consequences were not less painful.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is a beautiful evening in the later Spring ; somewhat sad—for it is twilight, and the decline of day, like the decline of life, is ever sad—albeit sometimes beautiful—it is such an evening as makes the unbeliever proclaim a faith, from the marvellous evidence of a first Great Cause, in the harmony which subsists between the susceptibility of the mind and external objects ; between the glory of nature and the sense of love which that glory awakens. The air is soft as the breath of an innocent child, and balmy as the sigh of love. And deeper and deeper blushes the sky, like the young bride in her pride, as the night creeps on apace. The scene is the same we have before described ; beneath the shady arbour, and above the waterfall, where the branches bend into the waters as though to kiss their shadows, and the wild flowers exhale their last perfume, ever the sweetest—like the memory of a last kiss. Some days have elapsed since we were seated in this spot ; and showers have fallen, and washed away the small monument of violets, mosses, and purple blossoms, which had been so carefully erected ; the names, lightly cut in the bark of the trees, are even now of deeper hue ; alas ! some day to become illegible.

Not three, but two, are now sitting there ; the third is absent ; and these two sit silent—for a great word has been spoken, never to be recalled. The mysterious essence of a second self has penetrated into either heart. They both look into the western sky, as though they would read the future which lies beneath its orange and its purple tints ; and a smile which gives to each face the glory as of angels breaks over their countenances ; so blissful seems the future, so infinite in its capacity for enjoyment. The young girl—for it is Ida—has taken Ernest's hand in hers, which she presses to her lips, and on that hand tears distilled from the fulness of a happy heart are falling ; and to the oft-repeated question, " You do love me, then, Ida ?" the only an-

swer is still a warmer kiss impressed upon that hand.

Beyond these words there were no professions, no revelations, no confidences; her silent kisses expressed it all; they were pledges of the hopes and anxieties of the past, the belief in the future, the truth of the present. It needed no language to assure Ernest that all he had suffered was now rewarded. That his self-denial was appreciated, that at last his dreams of a happiness in life, such as poets dream of in the golden days of youth, were to receive their accomplishment; in such happiness it is no idle imagery to say that hours pass like moments. Certainly one hour had elapsed since they had sat there, and yet Ernest still heard ringing through his brain the soft low Yes with which Ida had owned her affection. It was a long time ere he had dared to disclose to her all he felt. He had seen day after day pass at the castle, and concealed the thought that was ever on his lips. It was not until he heard from Mr. Leslie that he was compelled very shortly to go to London, that he summoned courage to make an avowal, which left him no alternative between happiness and misery.

He, too, had been much struck by the circumstance of Mr. Leslie leaving him so much alone with Ida, and the respect with which he appeared to regard him. That day he had ridden down with Ida and her father to Wimbourne, Mr. Leslie being anxious to see Ernest's agent respecting a farm which he wished him to value for him. He told him that he should be busy until very late, and Ernest then proposed to Ida to re-visit the scene of their last meeting.

They walked to that spot as two beings with separate existences; but ere many minutes had elapsed, like two streams their hearts mingled together, pure as crystal, and sparkling with hope. The spirit of love that haunts the spring, the forest and the moss seat, stood beside them, and united their hands; and so they sat, gazing first into the light of heaven, which in the sweet selfishness of a new affection they accepted as a glorious omen; and then into the light of each other's eyes. They believed at that moment that the firmament glowed, and the trees bore their bloom, and the violets scented the air for them alone. They heard a voice calling to them.

"We must go," said Ernest, mechanically, but he trembled, his cheek glowed, and his heart beat rapidly.

"My father! Will he not be angry?" exclaimed Ida.

"No, no," replied Ernest, "he cannot be angry; we have done no wrong; who shall stand between us and our affections? No, Ida, he cannot, he will not, deny you to me. He doats on you; he will not refuse you anything, if indeed you really love me."

"Can you doubt it, Ernest, now?"

"You will speak to him," she continued, after a pause, for they were approaching Mr. Leslie.

"Yes, I will. I will call to-morrow;" and till then—

It was but a moment; he put his arm round her waist; he drew her near to him; their lips clung together, as he prayed God to bless her, and to testify to his truth.

Mr. Leslie had been waiting for some time; the horses were saddled. For the first time he addressed Ida in a voice almost of anger at her delay.

Ernest's heart leaped to his lips as he shook Mr. Leslie's hand, and bade him good evening. He returned to the spot where that pledge had been given, which bound henceforth two souls together, and wrapped two existences in a mystic union. He endeavoured to recall the events of the last hour, but they evaded him like the shapes of those beautiful dreams which cross the brain, but leave the memory trackless. It was a relief for him to be alone, after the deep interest he had passed through, and the moments of new revelation that had been made to him. He seated himself on the bank where she had sat, and kissed the letters on the tree which her hand had traced, although the shades of evening had veiled the landscape, and the murmurs of the waters only indicated the river's flow; he almost thought that he beheld the same golden light they had gazed on together, and that even through twilight and distance he could trace the outlines of the castle turrets and its towers bleached by time. He rose from his seat and trod the ground in a state of exultation that vainly struggled for expression. However great the intellect, and wondrous the acquirements, it is not until a man has learnt to love and found that love returned, that he feels himself to be God-created, and comprehends an eternity of bliss; like coral islands in the blue seas of the West, which grow beneath the waters, and whose roots are interlaced together, although to the seaman's gaze they stand single and wide apart, so hearts may be indissolubly united,

even although the ties that bind them may never appear above the surface of the world; and then love, like the coral reef, wards off the violence of the world's tempests; it breaks the force of its passions let the wind blow as it listeth without; let the waves of human strife and the waste of human vanities dash against the rampart of affection, they only break into showers and fall in spray. Without all is hopeless, dark, and desolate, and the wind is never weary; within there is a harbour of blue water, tranquil and transparent as those seas of silver which the traveller in the desert sees stretching before his horizon.

The mists of evening gradually rose from the deep ravine, and dispersed in the blue ether; and then a milder light broke on the valley, like a smile on the face of a sleeper; it represented the calmness which Ernest prayed for, after the excitement of passion should have passed by—the beauty of repose, after the bustle and turmoil of life. A beautiful evening is like a glorious old age, that dies away with the light of a thousand bright and sparkling actions to illuminate, and the eternal beauty of faith to consecrate it.

It was on this same night another scene was passing at Beaumaris. The star-gleams were not less beautiful, as reflected in the waters of the Menai Channel, than they were when broken and spray-driven in the falls of the Alder. The waving line of the distant mountains broke the expanse of the heavens; the intervening space between them and the old tower of Beaumaris seemed contracted by a thin line of purple distance; almost at the foot of these towers the ripples murmured among the pebbles, and broke upon the shore; the voices of the fishermen in the distance tending their nets but slightly disturbed the profound repose. The lights of the town are one by one extinguished; but what can take a maiden through a wicket-gate to one of these towers at this late mysterious hour? She is young and beautiful as this May-night; and, as she folds her cloak around her, it must be for concealment, not for dread of the cold, for never was spring-breeze balmier. She starts and trembles as the night-wind lifts her curl, and lets it fall again upon her cheek, which is alternately flushed and pale; and on a green spot on the ancient ramparts a man is standing, concealed from any curious gaze by two broken shattered walls—him the maiden joins.

It is Algitha; — need we add that the man is Luttrell!

“You are late, my darling,” said he, in a low, affectionate, deep voice; to have heard him you would have believed that he possessed a heart.

“I am frightened, Alfred, indeed I am; I regret almost what I have done; let me return.”

“Of course; go.”

“Yes, but you will be angry, Alfred; you won't love me; you will never speak, never write to me again; you know what I have gone through for you this last fortnight; you know how wretched I have been; how all my relations here have turned against me. I have felt so much alone, Alfred, and I could scarcely write, even to my brother, with this secret preying upon my heart; all this must prove to you how much I love you—why ask for any other proof?”

“Tush!—women are always like that; they don't mind what they ask a man to sacrifice for them; and then, when it comes to the point, they talk stuff, of virtue, honour, and any other verbiage. I am sure if you have been annoyed this last week or two, I have passed through an Iliad of misery, bordered with those cursed relations of yours.”

“I am sure I felt for you, and was grateful, Alfred.”

“Felt for me! I dare say you did; that's all very well; but why, the devil, did you suppose I subjected myself to this annoyance, except for you?”

“I know that,” she timidly replied.

“Well then, prove that you love me.”

She was standing leaning against one of those old walls which were crumbling away; her face, even by that light, and in its paleness, was exquisitely lovely; some would have preferred that passionate pallor to the flush of excitement. Luttrell had taken one hand in his, and with the other one drew her cloak tighter round her form; she looked upon the glory of the night, which fell in showers of light around her, but she saw it not,—her whole heart was centred in him.

“Can you doubt me, Algitha?” continued Luttrell, now, in a low, soft, and trembling voice, which vibrated through her frame.

“Doubt you, Alfred!” she replied; “I would doubt the truth of the whole world before I could doubt you!”

“Can you believe, Algitha, that I would do you a wrong?—that if I ask you to express your love for me I am not prepared to lay my

whole life at your feet? Byron tells us that—

Man's love is to man's life a thing of nought;

but I tell you that my love for you absorbs every ambition and passion of my frame; there is no sacrifice I am not prepared to make for you,—there is no test which my affection will not bear. But, even if it were wrong to love me now,” and here the tempter sank his voice to a still lower whisper which the heart drinks in so earnestly, and which thrills through all its fibres, “but even if it were wrong, can there be a finer thing than a woman making a sacrifice for the object of her heart's attachment; can there be a nobler offering to love?”

“Oh, Alfred, spare me!” she murmured, for her head had fallen on his bosom.

“Have you not read,” he continued, “of women giving up fame, renown, family, fortune, all that they possess, for the men that they love?”

The “Yes” was scarcely intelligible.

“And would Algitha do less than this for the man that loves her?”

She did not answer this time—but, even as a child believes in its mother's love, she believed in that man's truth. She looked around—the wide waters were like a sea of silver rippling upon the shore; the sky was star-spangled, the moon in the fulness of her beauty. Oh, how could the voice of the tempter be heard in that glorious night!—even he, who feared not man or God, was awed by the solemnity of the hour, or why did he speak in a whisper?—for he knew not that there was any reason to fear a surprise. But at that moment, when he believed that his triumph was secured, a deep sound, muffled and rendered more mysterious by the distance, was borne by them on the breeze—it was the cathedral bell striking midnight.

Wonderful power of association!—that bell recalled to Algitha the church to whose service it was dedicated, and the faith to which that church was consecrated; it recalled the infinite love of those who had prayed for her and with her in childhood. She raised her eyes, and, as they met Luttrell's gaze, she observed a certain peculiarity of expression which made her recoil in fear; a dark cloud must have been blown across his countenance or his mind, for the features were gloomy and over-spread; for the moment, his fascination had deserted him, and she was free.

“Alfred,” she said, “let us go.”

“Yes!” he exclaimed, speaking through

his teeth, “I thought it would be so. Go you shall; but as you are unmerciful to me, so you may expect no mercy from me. You have trifled with me—you have only met me here to-night to ridicule me.”

“Alfred!—you are unjust!”

“Then prove I am not so, by remaining,” was his reply.

She was about to answer, when they heard a light footstep on the rampart below them. It was impossible for any one to have entered the ruins at that time of night without passing through the wicket, and the only person who had a key of the wicket was Mr. Maxwell. Algitha held her breath, trembling as she was for fear; Luttrell crept forward to the verge of the parapet; as he approached the angle of the wall he thought that he could perceive a figure retreating by the same path he had entered with Algitha. It might have been imagination; but he did not feel satisfied altogether that it was so, and he went on a little further, and when he turned again to speak to Algitha, she had vanished.

He rushed down the steep descent into the narrow walk which led to the house, and had just time to see her passing through the gate we have described. The victim had escaped the mesh!—and he stood in the solitude and the night alone. He paced up and down the ruins which so aptly represented his own heart—at one time so glorious in their perfection, but now abandoned and desolate. There is no greater misery than for such a man to be alone; he who loves solitude is never wholly lost. For him who ventures to meditate on the past there is some hope for the future. And what were Luttrell's thoughts as he stood on that green sward—on the spot where Algitha pledged her love to him? Was it a feeling of gratitude that he had been prevented injuring the innocent and lovely?—did one ray of contrition break on the darkness of his heart? No!—the only feeling he was susceptible of was that of outraged vanity; that he should have been foiled in his object was his deepest regret. For him the heavens possessed no glory; nature no beauty; night no voice; all his senses had by slow degrees become absorbed in his passions, and he had no feeling except for self.

Like those fabled Cayanean rocks, which are supposed to float in beautiful and fantastic shapes upon the surface of the water, misleading the unwary mariner by the forms which they assume, so Luttrell was current-driven through the world, but ever, by his

grace of form and deceptive appearance, he deluded the ignorant and simple-minded—or apter still to compare him to a wreck which bears the appearance of a gallant trustworthy ship, but is nevertheless doomed to destruction; gradually sinking, even in an unruffled sea, and under a sparkling sky, and threatening to engulf in its vortex all who may be attracted towards it.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Ernest rose the morning after the declaration he had made to Ida, it was with the feverish excitement of a man who feels that his hopes depend on the events of that day. He was determined to lose no time in informing Mr. Leslie of all that had passed. With his keen sense of honour, he felt that the least delay would be reprehensible, but he could not be blind to the fact that there was a current of ambition running through Mr. Leslie's character, which would stand very much in the way of giving his consent to the marriage; on the other hand, Mr. Leslie was deeply attached to his daughter, and was scarcely likely to deny her any wish on which she had set her heart. He had always shown great consideration for Ernest,—not merely a consideration for that position which his family occupied at Wimbourne, but an esteem for those qualities which had endeared him to the whole neighbourhood. The more Ernest weighed and pondered on these various arguments, the more puzzled he became. In truth, he might have reasonably avoided the trouble of reflecting, as whatever the result of his interview with Mr. Leslie might be, it could not be in any way affected by his deliberations. But thus it ever happens that “the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,” and men pass time in reflection which should be devoted to action.

It was not without very great misgivings that Ernest started on this visit, and, like all men possessed with one idea, he thought that every one he passed upon the road was aware that a most important crisis in his fate was at hand; even the scenery of the park, the colouring of the landscape, assumed a different aspect to his eyes, as if Nature sympathized with him. When he reached the castle, and had given his horse to the groom, he was shown into the library, where the servant told him that Mr. Leslie would soon join him.

Ernest had been so pre-occupied with his own feelings, that he had not observed Mr.

Leslie walking on the terrace, but Mr. Leslie had caught a glimpse of him, and immediately retreated, for he had not as yet made up his mind as to the precise course which he should pursue. Mr. Leslie was in a very difficult position, and his heart was occupied with two equally absorbing and conflicting passions, which at one moment, with all the sanguine disposition of a successful speculator, he imagined that he should be able to reconcile, namely, his strong affection for his daughter, and his ambitious projects. For some time he so far deceived himself as to believe that these two objects were, in the present instance, naturally associated together. He had succeeded in the first step; he had become proprietor of a princely possession, and gratified Ida. When he first became acquainted with Ernest, he again thought he should obtain all he desired by having him for his son-in-law; but unfortunately his attention had latterly not only been greatly absorbed, but greatly estranged, by a correspondence with Lord Linton, in which the latter proposed that he should stand at the next general election as candidate for one of the metropolitan boroughs. This was precisely what Mr. Leslie desired; he had that failing common to all men, of being indifferent to everything he possessed; he did not care to be member for his own native town, but preferred some constituency in the suburbs of the metropolis. That life is a succession of objects was most truly exemplified in his case. He had amassed a large fortune, bought a princely residence, but still, like the fisherman in the Arabian Nights, he desired something beyond his present possessions. Besides, he had lost his habits of daily occupation, and the novelty and excitement which had at first surrounded his new residence with so many objects of interest were fast ebbing away. Like all persons whose time has been constantly employed, and who have not had the opportunity of acquiring habits of study, he became restless, and sometimes even querulous; although not a keen observer of the softer sentiments of our nature, he could not fail to perceive the growing attachment between Ida and Ernest, and, like many other abler diplomatists, in his difficulty of determining on any particular course of action, he adopted a *laissez faire* policy, always reflecting upon Ida's extreme youth, which would furnish him with a sufficient excuse for delaying any marriage for at least a twelvemonth, during which period he would have ample time to consider what was

the best course for him to take. He acted on M. Mendizabel's aphorism, "*La plus grande qualité d'un homme est de savoir gagner le temps.*"

Thus ever is it, presumption will build up its Tower of Babel in the heart, and teach it to strive after the impossible; day after day, in unceasing toil, Vanity, Ambition, and Pride raise the splendid pile, and then at the breath of the destroying angel the fabric crumbles to pieces. Forgetful that the condition of man upon earth is to be humble and ignorant, he, who has been successful in his course of life, claims the merit to himself, and walks with haughty step and dauntless front. Thus the great qualities of the mind are perverted. Science, in her entangled ignorance, pretends to read the majesty of the heavens, and describe its wonders. There is no longer to be anything hid from man; there is no element which he cannot control or baffle.

"It likes me not that mortal hands have sounded
Each inlet in the hyperborean main,
And track'd, and traced, and mapp'd the sinuous
bends
Of Niger's weird, unfathomable stream."

These are the powerful and beautiful lines in which Mr. Hope has expressed the idea, and with him we agree that the characteristic of this day is "knowledge overstrained and want of faith." So it was with Mr. Leslie; he had been so pre-eminently successful in life, that he began to think himself favoured above all men; in his days of toil and care, he had felt his weakness, the necessity of a sustaining power; but now, in his elevation, he began to think that for him all the anxieties and stumbling-blocks which Providence puts in the way of all men should be removed out of his path. If, in the midst of his prosperity, he had reflected on the necessities of life, on that ring which encircles all men, he would have asked himself the question, Who told him that his life was to be one unbroken career of success and blessedness,—who gave him the assurance of an unclouded life? Had he looked towards the heavens, he would, like Vathek, have observed, from his lofty pinnacle, that the stars were as far removed from him as ever.

It so happened that on this very morning Mr. Leslie had heard again from Lord Linton, pressing him in the strongest terms to come to some decision respecting the borough in question. "My dear friend," he wrote, "you must not be permitted to bury yourself in the country; with your wealth and position, your

services would be most acceptable to the government, and you know that Lord M—is not a man to allow those services to go unrewarded. At all events, I wonder you do not run up to town for a few weeks, before the season closes. We could then talk over this matter, and it would give Miss Leslie an opportunity of seeing something of the world; and you will not fail to be gratified at the sensation which, I am certain, she will create. My sister, Lady Sandbeck, you remember, was very much struck with her, and she desires me to assure you, how happy she will feel to chaperone her, during your stay in town. You know, we are not very racketing people, for the duties of office occupy much of my time, and Lady Sandbeck talks of not coming to London next year, as she has taken into her head that late hours do not agree with her, and it would be a pity to let slip so favourable an opportunity of making eligible acquaintances, which may be useful to your family in after years.

"P.S. Most confidential.

"I think that the government will very soon break up; if it should do so, it is far from improbable that I may have some high foreign appointment, and I know that Lord M— has not forgotten that there was a marquise in our family."

The tone, the temper, the action, expressed in this letter, stimulated Mr. Leslie's ambition. Great society, official eminence, the lustre of rank dazzled him. The postscript most especially, although it less than any other portion of the letter referred to him, excited his interest. The baron promoted to the rank of marquis, his schoolfellow, one of the great magnates of that city, the freedom of whose walls the noblest peers are proud to possess—Lord Linton, a marquis. The step from a commoner to a peerage was not greater than from the state of baron to that of marquis. How many men had been raised solely by their own industry (without one half of those advantages which he possessed) to great social rank; of the great houses which ruled in England, how many had been founded by the men of the people, and why should not he, once in Parliament, found a dynasty for himself? And Ida so beautiful, and graceful, and beloved, she too would assist him in this laudable ambition. Married into some great house, she would be worthy of the position to which Providence had called her; why should not he give a fresh title to this old castle, and

look forward to posterity, as others look backward to their ancestry.

And as he trod the pavement, and gazed on the central flag-tower, the large ensign fluttered in the breeze. He turned towards the extensive vale and marked the spires of the different parish churches, in which he possessed either a whole or a partial interest, and his heart swelled within him. Already he had familiarised himself with the idea of his new position; the first step in ambition had been taken. He began to think it was essential to him to follow the path which Lord Linton had sketched out for him.

At that moment he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and caught a glimpse of Ernest. Immediately all his ambitious projects experienced a check. He was not so wholly lost to the influence of imagination, as not to feel that possible difficulties might arise with Ida, and kind-hearted hospitable man as he was, he had a sincere regard for Ernest. After the protracted absence of Ida on the last evening, he felt it to be very probable that Ernest came to announce his affection for her. For this reason he turned away, as soon as he saw him, in order to take time to collect his mind, rather a foolish process under the circumstances, when the heart is generally the truest and safest monitor. "Remember," said Talleyrand, "and always mistrust your first impressions, because," he continued with true machiavelism, "they are almost always the correct ones." But if it requires two people to be of the same mind, as Mr. Crawley once informed the House of Commons, to break one of the commandments, it is equally true that etiquette entirely depends upon both parties desiring to keep it up, inasmuch as it is very difficult to avoid a man who is resolved to speak to you. Consequently, Mr. Leslie was soon disturbed in his prudential calculations by Ernest's voice, who was tired of being kept waiting in the library. Mr. Leslie started at seeing him, somewhat timidly extended his hand, and looked rather confused.

"Mr. Leslie," said Ernest rapidly, as if alarmed at his own voice, "I wish to speak to you on an important matter, on a matter of vital consequence to me, if you are at leisure, and can give me a quarter of an hour."

There was an earnestness, a deference, a fascination in Ernest's voice, that touched Mr. Leslie; and he was on the point of replying with the same frankness of manner, when he looked at the address of the letter which he held in his hand, and he checked

himself—it was the frank he had received from Lord Linton.

"Well, Mr. Vane," was all he said.

"I shall not detain you long, Mr. Leslie, for it is a subject which flows from my heart to my lips. I love Miss Leslie; I have reason to believe my attachment is returned. I have called to ask your consent to our marriage. My fate is in your hands; you cannot, you will not deny me, sir, for I love, I——"

He would have continued, but his heart caught the influence of Mr. Leslie's coldness, and it checked him immediately; he saw at once that he had calculated too hastily.

Mr. Leslie replied calmly, and with the formality of middle age: "There are, Mr. Vane, two things which all fathers naturally look for in a son-in-law; first, that he should be of a highly unexceptionable character, and secondly, that he should have a sufficient fortune to keep his wife suitably; the latter part of the proposition is not of such great importance in the present case, and I need not say you amply fulfil the former. I have every reason to be rejoiced at having made your acquaintance, indeed I may say I am very happy to claim you as a friend"—and, as he spoke, nature had its sway, and he crammed Lord Linton's letter into his pocket. "We have passed some very pleasant days together, and I am really much attached to you, Mr. Vane, and if I hesitate——"

"Oh, do not speak of hesitating," exclaimed Ernest; for, the moment Mr. Leslie's voice warmed towards him, his own heart expanded with hope. "If you knew, sir, how I love Miss Leslie, you would not hesitate for one moment; believe me, it is not without hesitation, tremour, and doubt, Mr. Leslie, I have approached this subject; I should, perhaps, not have ventured to have done so, had I not heard something about your departure. I am deeply sensible of Miss Vane's position, how much you have a right to expect that she should make a marriage in a worldly sense so immeasurably superior to that which I propose to you; but then I know how kind you are, and how fond of her; and I know, moreover, that there is something which is even superior to a social position, and that is a pure, a deep, and unalterable attachment. You know me too well, Mr. Leslie, to believe that I have any low personal object in view. I can honestly assure you that if Ida—I beg your pardon, I meant to say, if Miss Leslie were penniless, this circumstance would in no degree affect the feelings which I entertain to—

wards her. It is this conviction, and this alone, which I feel justifies me in preferring such a request."

Mr. Leslie was silent, but a slight smile played round the upper lip; he was flattered by the deference implied in Ernest's observations, by his admission of his own superiority; and it just occurred to him, that whereas a son-in-law of high rank might treat him with indifference, if not with superiority, in Ernest he should possess a son-in-law full of submission to his will. After all, was not this a very important consideration?

They had reached the end of the terrace, and were looking down into the vale; at this moment Mr. Leslie caught a glimpse of Wimbourne, and his dreams of local ambition returned upon him. He took Ernest's hand affectionately.

"If I have appeared to receive your proposition with something approaching to coldness, Mr. Vane, you must ascribe it to my astonishment at its most unexpected character. I am flattered, very much flattered, I can assure you, but——"

"What, Sir?" said Ernest, with eagerness.

"My child is very young, and she is an only child, Mr. Vane; I could not make up my mind to part from her so soon, even were her youth not an obstacle. Only a few weeks settled here, it would break my heart to think of her leaving me. If, however——" and Mr. Leslie leaned some time on the parapet of the terrace, scanning the horizon, as if there he could read his decision written in the heavens.

"If, however," he at length resumed, "you are willing to wait a twelvemonth, and Ida remains in the same mind, then I shall, at the expiration of that time, at once give my consent. Nothing can be fairer than this, can it, Mr. Vane?" said he gaily, as though his mind was relieved by this mezzo termine decision.

Ernest's heart leaped at the idea. "Thank, thank you," he articulated.

"But," said Mr. Leslie, "there is only one thing I must require—that you frame some excuse for leaving the neighbourhood during the fortnight we remain here. As we are agreed upon this year's probation, I do not think it would be right in you to anticipate the time when you will be entitled to enjoy her society. A year seems a long time to you; but, alas! it will pass only too soon. Meanwhile, I must ask you to permit her to be perfectly unfettered in the exercise of her

judgment. The engagement is, you understand, conditional. You have faith in her constancy, or otherwise you never would have confessed your attachment to my child. Well, then, you must not only have faith but patience, and subscribe to my wishes."

"I will, sir," said Ernest, in a melancholy voice, for the idea of this sudden parting saddened him, and darkened the visions of the future.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Vane. You have acted as I believed you ever would act—honourably and frankly. I am obliged to you. I am sure this is an act of kindness to Ida; for, as I am positive about the year's delay, it will only pain her much more at parting, if you were to remain here the next fortnight. Besides, I myself have many engagements, so it would, under any circumstances, be quite out of the question. Stop here to-day to dinner, and to-morrow you can write some excuse for leaving Wimbourne. I think it better she should not be made acquainted with the cause of your departure. I myself will tell her the arrangement into which we have entered."

"I must yield, sir," said Ernest, "to all your wishes. But my sister——"

"What of her?" asked Mr. Leslie.

"I heard from her this morning, and it seems that she has not been well; and she returns in three or four days. If I am absent——"

"We can manage that admirably," exclaimed Mr. Leslie, who saw all his projects turning out favourably. "Ida shall write and invite her here. She will be a delightful companion for her, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that she is in the society of those in whom you are so deeply interested. Now all this is very well arranged, is it not?"

Ernest's only answer was a smile and a sigh, as Mr. Leslie turned, and left the terrace to look for Ida.

He sighed, for the human heart is greedy of happiness. But yesterday, if he had been told that such terms would have been offered to him, he would have seized them eagerly; but now he only saw the barrier which time opposed to his wishes. A year of anxiety, of hope deferred, seems an eternity, for time is measured not by hours but by sensations. Ever as we are wafted over the wide and undiscovered ocean to that America which all men, Columbus-like, seek after, and which so many seek in vain, while the shattered

branches floating on the surface of the ocean prove the existence of such a land beyond the seas—more distant seems the shore, and more weary grows the heart, as the desire increases without the facility of attainment; but to some there is not even a propitious breeze, nor a favourable current, or any indications of the land of promise, and then the hours pass so heavily, the sun seems to be arrested in its course, and the length of the days is only to be surpassed by the length of the nights.

Ernest was not so unjust as to blame Mr. Leslie for his decision; he appreciated the excellence of his intention, but, as a man after the toil of a long journey or arduous service, when he sits down to rest, recalls every exciting incident of his travel, so Ernest, now that his anxiety was over, that he was assured of Ida's affection and her father's ultimate approbation, began to reflect on the past, on the moments of happiness that he had passed in her society, on all the visions which imagination, vivid as a young poet's, had conjured up, of a glorious future, and he almost regretted the impulse which had induced him to precipitate these events, and to leave the indefinite for the ascertained.

'Tis so in love, the faithful heart
From her dim vision would not part,
When first to her fond gaze is given
That purest spot in Fancy's heaven.
From all the gorgeous sky beside,
Though pledged her own, and sure to abide,
Dearer than every past noon-day,
That twilight gleam to her though faint and far
away.

And there was something even more than this; he had passed from the realm of romance to the world of reality; his secret thoughts, the associates of his slumber, would now be openly proclaimed and descanted on; he was no longer a free man; he was to be separated from the object of his affections, and yet he could no longer act as a free agent. The secrecy of real affection, the mystery which it loves to preserve, is like the veil which the novice wears at her first communion, thin and transparent if you will, and yet the emblem of virtue and innocence, and separating the devotee from the rude contact of the world. When Ernest reflected on the manner in which Mr. Leslie had met his advances, even while he rendered him all justice, he could not avoid feeling that a rude hand had touched the flower he had cherished; as Alfieri, in his *Mirza*, has beautifully said,

Ritegno al favellar d'amanti'
Fia sempre un padre.

Between the poetry of the heart and the practice of life what a difference! between the outpouring of the soul that loves sacrifice better than gold, and of the obligations of society which prizes the gold and denies the sacrifice—between the young who dream of an affection which can adequately replace all the luxuries or even necessities of life, and the middle age which places these material considerations above all others—between the confiding smile of the ardent and the cold sneer of the practical—between the words of promise and the language of prudence! What a gulf separates the Church which pronounces the solemn decree, that there shall be in love community of goods, as well as community of heart, and the world that declares that from the first moment of marriage there shall be separation of interests—between the voice of worldly prudence breathed into the ear of the bride and the voice of heavenly wisdom pronounced at the altar. In a word, between marriage in its solemn and mysterious conception, and marriage as it is fashioned by that strange phantom called society; the difference between the cradle and the grave—the night and morning, the finite and the infinite, is not more remarkable!

Thus felt Ernest; the words which Mr. Leslie had uttered, or rather the tone with which he had spoken them, and the material interests which they had expressed, sank into his heart; he became mournful and saddened. Ida's spirits caught the infection, when they met at dinner. Mr. Leslie did not give Ernest much opportunity for private conversation with her during the evening, and all that Ida knew therefore was that, if they remained in the same disposition for one twelvemonth, the marriage was then to take place, and, when she bade Ernest good night, it was with a cheerful voice, because she felt confidence in her constancy.

CHAPTER XXI.

ERNEST VANE was one of those men who, when once they are assured that a particular course of action is right, never for one moment flinch in the discharge of their duty. After the conversation with Mr. Leslie there was no alternative but to fulfil his promise both in spirit and in deed, to write early the next morning, in the sense which Mr. Leslie prescribed, giving some sufficient reason for his sudden departure, and he enclosed a note for Ida, full of all those expressions of affection, in the duration of which the young are

so confident; at the same time he made the formal suggestion that Algitha on her return should remain at the castle during the remainder of their stay.

Ida was quite surprised and disappointed at the receipt of that letter; it was a sudden blow to all those hopes she had been conjuring up, the plans which, with the usual fertility of a woman's brain, she had been arranging. Though it seemed to her an unavoidable and she knew it to be only a temporary separation, still it dimmed the joyousness of her day; it was the first cloud of sorrow, the merest vapour compared to the masses of clouds which blacken some horizons, but yet it was a cloud, and a cloud where she had hitherto seen nothing but blue sky; and then she had no one in whom she could confide, that first necessity of all young hearts. She wanted a friend; she loved her father, but could not entrust her inmost feelings to him; he would have smiled kindly, have tapped her on the cheek, have called her a little poetess,—but there the sympathy would have ended; and with the sympathy, the confidence. So entirely was she absorbed in her thoughts, that she had almost forgotten to write to Algitha about the new arrangement proposed for her; but once determined to exert herself, her mind was partially relieved; besides, it was a great happiness for her to write to Ernest's sister.

At first she intended relating to Algitha all that had passed between herself and Ernest, but afterwards she determined to keep the secret until they met; she felt that the form of a letter was inadequate to express her feelings.

The days passed heavily until Algitha's arrival; she revisited the spots which had been consecrated by the silence of affection; she took the note he had written her on the morning of his departure, and read it in every place where she could recall the least association with his name; if her father spoke to her of the pleasures which were in store for him in London, she looked gratified, for she wished to please him, but she thought how happy she should be to remain in quiet seclusion at Melwood.

In such a frame of mind, the magnificence of the castle, the train of pompous servants, the regularity of so large an establishment, oppressed her; to be alone is the chief desire of those whose heart is already occupied; the realities of life become too palpable, its ritual is too formal. Love is always the most selfish

of passions—and yet those who had witnessed Ida's meeting with Algitha would scarcely have proclaimed this theory, for after the first moment she forgot even Ernest in the anxiety for Algitha's health, and truly to the eye of friendship there was no slight reason for the alarm.

Those who had seen the young girl when she left Wimbourne in the pride and richness of youth, could not have believed that the same person stood before them; it was no extravagant phrase to say she could scarcely be recognized, for Algitha's beauty had depended greatly on her lively joyous expression, on the dimples of her countenance, on the bloom of her cheek, on the roundness of her form, and all this had fled. As a landscape unrelieved by light affords no pleasure to the eye, so the human face, when the light of joy is faded, loses much of that beauty which is frequently so fatal. She resembled one who had lost that last great boon of heaven—Hope. The eye was cold and fixed—the cheek of that wan paleness which indicates restless and anxious nights; where the dimples formerly lurked, the lines of suppressed anguish might be traced; even in her dress there was that disorder which is the outward sign of a heart ill at ease. For some time she resisted all Ida's enquiries, but at last fell upon her neck, weeping like a child.

"You were unhappy, and you never wrote to me, Algitha."

There was no reply. The hysterical sobs continued, and there was hopeless anguish in all her attitude.

"Come to my room," said Ida, for she heard the sound of servants approaching; "we shall be alone there, and you shall tell me all."

She took her to her boudoir, and locked the door, and if there ever be consolation derived from a state of hopeless misery, Algitha would have found it in the affectionate manner in which Ida endeavoured to console her, not with the common topics of friends of the hour, but with the silent sympathy, the overflowing affection, that real interest which absorbs all ourself in our anxiety for another.

What calamity, she thought, could have befallen Algitha to account for this excess of misery.

At last Ida mentioned Ernest's name, but not without a deep blush rising to her cheek.

"Thank God for one thing," cried Algitha, falling on her knees, "that Ernest is not here. I should not have dared to meet him, he so pure, noble, and upright, and I so weak and sinful. He would not say much, but his kindness would be even more bitter than his blame, for there is but one thing that can comfort a heart when it is breaking under a weight of remorse, and that is a weight of punishment, of expiation. Can I believe," and she raised her head from her hands, down which the tears were streaming,— "can I believe that this is the room where I parted from you, Ida, but one month since; every picture in the same place, the same view of sunny meadows and fresh bending woods extending before me, and yet in this short month I have lived a life-time of suffering, and am miserable."

"Algitha, you frighten me," exclaimed Ida; "what terrible secret can you have? You are talking wildly; what can make you miserable? With your youth any folly you have been guilty of is soon forgotten; a few days' rest, and you will be happy as ever again. I am sure you will, my sweetest Algitha. I will tell you a real secret, Algitha, if you will not cry any longer; a secret in which you also are so deeply interested, which I am sure will make you happy, and——"

"Make me happy!" exclaimed Algitha, starting from her seat. She knew only one secret, and could only imagine one happiness.

"Yes, I am sure it will, Algitha, for you have often said that you love me as a sister."

"I do," murmured the poor girl.

"Well, we shall one day be sisters indeed, for I am engaged to marry Ernest."

She expected that Algitha would have uttered an exclamation of delight, and pressed her to her heart, instead of which she only raised her head with a sad smile, which sorrow could not render otherwise than sweet, and then again the tears flowed apace.

Ida was disappointed; and her keen susceptibilities were wounded. "Well, you must be indeed changed, Algitha," she said, "not to congratulate me on this."

Changed; yes, how changed! the greatest change that can fall on any human being, from ignorance to knowledge, from the pure to the impure. She felt the force of the expression "changed," and it made her weep gain.

"You have told me truly that I am changed, Ida," she said, after a pause; "so changed that it may be even now you will recall the pledge given to Ernest, because you will not wish to have me as a sister; this it is that induces me to disclose to you a secret which should otherwise have died with me. I would have denied myself the poor consolation of pouring out my heart to another, and I would have saved you, my friend and companion, the bitterness of knowing how foolish I have been. Shall I then tell you all, Ida?"

"Speak, speak, Algitha."

It was with a faltering voice, in broken but not uneloquent language, she told the tale. She extenuated nothing for herself, save, indeed, in the qualities which she attributed to the man who had wronged her; for she spoke of the coward as brave, of the miserable trickster as possessing a noble heart, of the dastard and selfish as generous and unselfish; like the prisoner in darkness and bondage, who in his dreams still dwells in the sunshine and amid the breezes he once so loved; so she in the night of her sorrow still dwelt on the glory of his smile, and the melody of his voice; was it that these imagined excellencies dignified her own choice, or glorified her weakness; no, it was what men are so apt to call a woman's credulity, but what might be more truly designated as her perfect confidence and untiring self-denial. She cannot believe in falsehood of which she has never felt the incentive; and so even now Algitha spoke of the prayers which Luttrell had breathed, of the broken-heartedness he had expressed, of the promises he had made to her; and when she came to the sacrifice he had claimed, the colour then rose again to her cheek, the nostril dilated, the eyes brightened, for she was speaking of her passionate love for him.

"Oh! Algitha," exclaimed Ida, "do not speak so wildly."

But then she continued the tale from the evening we left her. It seems that soon after that night his visits became rarer, and his temper more irritable; it appeared, to use Algitha's language, as if he had been the one to sacrifice all. She did one day reproach him for words of cruel and cutting unkindness, and he made it the pretence of quarrelling with her. This is our phrase; hers was, that "he was justly offended." The next day a note came to tell her that he was ordered off with a detachment to another part of the country. Then there was the old story,—

they should meet again—he would never forget her—he renewed his promises of marriage; and then the place became hateful to her. What he told her was so far true, he was ordered away with a detachment, but he did not whisper to her that he was named for that service at his own request. Her relations were very cold and distant to her, for they suspected much; so when she received Ida's letter she lost no time in leaving Beaumaris. There was the tale. "And now," she said, "Ida, you will despise me."

"Despise you, Algitha! oh no, I shall love you better even in your sorrow than in your moments of happiness. I shall love to cherish you, and to bring the smile again to those lips, the light to those features; but—" and she hesitated.

"What is it, Ida?"

"Do you still hope he will return?"

Oh! foolish Ida, when did the deserted cease to hope, when did the castaway, with the waste of waters foaming round him, cease to pierce the farthest horizon in the hope of salvation; when did the parched traveller, in the sandy desert, cease until the last gasp to see a mirage extending before him. Oh, Hope! at once friend and deceiver, guide and misleader; the image placed at the prow of every vessel, which first kisses the ocean in which so many sink, Hope which so often only prolongs agony, brilliant as the lightning which points the way of life to some, while it flashes destruction over others.

So Algitha hoped; but it was a sad, broken, sickening kind of hope; in her hours of dejection she doubted, in her moments of exaltation she believed; but whenever she could for a short time reflect calmly on her state, and on Luttrell's conduct, the conviction filled her soul that he was false. There were expressions and language she could not forget; had he been irritated and passionate, she might have hoped; or had he even withdrawn every loving word, and exchanged them for insulting ones, she might have imagined some erroneous ground for the wonderful change; but his last letter was fatal to her confidence, it expressed just that amount of affection which implies a growing indifference—the worst of all conditions, just as a mariner had better be tossed about by every wind that blows than be left in a dead calm; in a storm he can but perish at last, and he may be driven to some coast, and the most inhospitable shore is preferable to the slow

death of stagnor and the placidity of decay. With the quick apprehension of a woman, she at once saw that she was deserted; and so it was, that when in reply to Ida's question she assured her that she did hope, she pronounced the word with tears and sighs.

And he who had done this deed, who for a moment's vanity, to gratify a miserable fatuity, had sacrificed a spirit the most guileless and innocent, did his heart reproach him? In the silence of night, when living objects are dim to view, and the heart creates its phantoms and shapes itself in dreams, did he picture a child fresh as the virgin spring, and bright as May flowers, for in sleep the vilest hearts are at moments purified, and the direst criminals murmur the name of their mother, and dare to bless her! Did he remember that he, too, had been once a child, praying in lisping accents for a blessing on all mankind, when the faults of childhood were objects of such deep regret; or did he see a baneful and weeping form rising before him, and hear the direst of all curses murmured against him—the curse not of a perishing frame, but of a broken heart?

CHAPTER XXII.

"SHE is very changed, Ida," said Mr. Leslie, two days after Algitha's arrival.

"Do you think so, papa?" Ida answered, with some slight confusion. "Do you think so?" What a reply; why she had wept over the change—had dreaded the observation of her father—and yet she replied, "Do you think so?" Beautiful deceiver!

"She is so changed," he continued, "that I have some idea of writing to Ernest to beg him to return. I was not sorry when he left the castle, for I wish you to have a fair opportunity of testing your affection, my darling Ida; but really I am not at all comfortable about Algitha, and we should learn to make sacrifices for others."

Yes, thought Ida, it is true that we should learn to make a sacrifice for others; her heart bounded at the idea of Ernest's return, but she thought how miserable it would make Algitha; she remembered how she had congratulated herself on finding him absent; it would be very selfish in her to confirm her father in his idea, so she replied,

"If you remember, he said that he had some important engagement; it might be inconvenient for him to return just now; besides, I think he would be much alarmed at Algitha's state. After a few days she may re-

cover her health, and be better able to enjoy his society."

"How do you think she will like seeing any company, my dear Ida?"

"Company!" exclaimed Ida, in a voice of surprise. "Who is coming here?"

"I have postponed our departure for a few days; for Lord Elversfoot proposed coming here the day after to-morrow."

"Lord Elversfoot! Who is he?" exclaimed Ida, in a voice of surprise.

"You are not a great politician, my dear child, or you would have seen in yesterday's paper that Lord Linton had been created a marquis; you remember Lord Linton the few days you passed in London; he was very civil to you; he is becoming a greater man every day; the same paper states that he will probably go as Ambassador at Paris, and that the present Lord Linton is to stand immediately for some county."

Ida listened to all this information with the most perfect indifference. She cared nothing for Lord Elversfoot or his family.

"And why is he made a marquis, papa?"

"He has been a very faithful servant of the Government; he is a brilliant clever man, and he owes a great deal to manner. Lord Chesterfield places it as the first essential of a statesman and a diplomatist. I have not much acquaintance with political men, but I have always heard Lord Elversfoot rated very high; he has had the best appointments in the gift of the crown, and succeeded admirably in each; do you think Algitha will dislike meeting him—"

"She will probably stay in her room, papa, for she complains a great deal, and proposed this morning to remain quiet for a few days."

Notwithstanding the information contained in Lord Linton's former letter, Mr. Leslie had been greatly surprised at seeing the announcement to which he referred in the morning paper; still more was he astonished at the intimation of Lord Elversfoot's immediate arrival. The reason assigned for the sudden visit was always the same—his desire to conclude a definitive arrangement respecting Marylebone, in which Lord Elversfoot still retained a great interest, although all the family property had been desperately squandered away. Why he took such a great interest in Marylebone and Mr. Leslie it were hard to say, except for the reason assigned by him in the first instance, his having become the proprietor of Castle Melwood; but gradually that impression wore itself out of Mr. Leslie's mind.

At first he was vain of his new possessions, but now, when accustomed to them, he ceased to attach so great a value to them, and the importance of that rank which he did not possess assumed gigantic proportions in his eyes; he, therefore, could not believe that a person like the Marquis of Elversfoot, ex-Secretary of State, Cabinet Minister, Ambassador Plenipotentiary, could be influenced in the interest he expressed for him by mean considerations; he was now sure that he only visited him from old fellowship, and a real desire to see his schoolfellow embarked in the same career through which he himself had achieved so much honour and distinction; in fact, the man of experience had come round to the opinion which his daughter expressed the first night she was introduced to the reader, that "He was liked for himself!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE was something extremely fascinating in Lord Linton, or rather to call him by his new title, Lord Elversfoot. He was anything but handsome, his back was rather bent by an old spine complaint, he could scarcely with justice be termed bald, and yet it would have been wrong to have talked of cutting his hair, the little he had being very thin, lank, and grey; he had a touch, the slightest touch, of the dandy in his composition. But at the first moment you detected the man who possessed himself and who was master of his craft. The air of deference with which he listened to the most crude and stolid opinions of crass ignorance, the calm and admirable manner in which he evaded an argument, or yielded a point, all marked him as a man of constant practice in society; and that particular society which is emphatically called the best. With the quick penetration which such practice gives, he had in a very few interviews gauged the character of Mr. Leslie, and the possibility of enlisting his feelings through his vanity; he saw the advantage which his rank gave him over the man inexperienced in the world, however acute he might be in the mere practical business of life, and he determined to turn this to his advantage. An alliance between his son and Miss Leslie would retrieve his broken fortune, and Luttrell's position in society; he knew that so far as his son was concerned, with such objects in view, it was a matter of perfect indifference to him who he married; if any compunction did cross his mind, it arose from that feeling of interest in Ida, which she could not fail to

excite. He knew his son's character only too well, and when he contrasted his abandoned and profligate habits with the gentle and loving qualities which he perceived in Ida, he was shocked and pained at being the promoter of an alliance which was to consign her to almost inevitable misery; but that heartless observation, that charity commences at home, deadened his better feelings. If it was a question of suffering, better, he thought, that any other family should suffer rather than his own; besides, these marriages often turned out happier than was expected, and so on.

It is quite surprising how easy it is to find arguments to comfort ourselves for the misfortunes of others. When Lord Elversfoot proposed to Mr. Leslie to become candidate for Marylebone, his only object was to induce him to come to London; once in London, he knew that nothing would be easier than to throw Luttrell a good deal into Ida's society, and he attached so much importance to fashionable manners and appearance, that he thought that, this point once achieved, all the rest was easy of accomplishment. He had not, however, sufficiently studied the power of such a disposition as Ida's. Like many men, so wise in the circle to which they belong, that circle which exists entirely on the bustle and excitement of life, he was disposed to agree with Pope, that all women were of much the same stamp of intellect and character. He would have seen little difference between Algitha and Ida, and yet there never were two persons more entirely opposite to each other. They only resembled each other in the warmth and truth of their affections; Algitha was the child of impulse and passion—Ida of intelligence and love. Lord Elversfoot little imagined that a woman of the gentle mould of Ida could, if necessary, be determined and resolute; he was a man who calculated everything to a nicety, and that is at once to say, that he misjudged; for men outwit themselves by their calculations and over-refinements, and attribute motives to people who are only influenced by feelings, and these men very rarely take into account the force of imagination; such was Lord Elversfoot, an over-clever, as well as overrated man.

He arrived in the course of the same afternoon that Mr. Leslie announced his visit to Ida, and was soon walking with him on the South Terrace. Of course Mr. Leslie, as is the custom of all new proprietors, pointed out every point of view, interesting or otherwise,

to Lord Elversfoot, forgetting as Lord Dudley so truly observes, that the circumstances which rendered them so interesting to him could not be fully appreciated by others. But Lord Elversfoot, like a practised diplomatist, appeared to take the most intense interest in the lay of the ground, the size of sundry trees, and all the local circumstances which had prevented the erection of various buildings, and while he assented to every plan which Mr. Leslie purposed carrying out, he paid several compliments to his admirable taste.

"I am afraid, my lord," said Mr. Leslie, in one of those lucid intervals which nature sometimes bestows even on the most self-blinded, "I am afraid, my lord, you care nothing for agricultural pursuits?"

"My dear Leslie," replied the new marquis, giving him his hand with an apparent exuberance of kindness; "my dear Leslie, for a person so wholly ignorant as I am on such matters, you could not have found any one who takes so deep an interest in agricultural statistics."

"Well, my dear lord," replied the gratified Mr. Leslie, "I will continue;" and he did continue; and he told him all he had learned from his agent about fattening cattle on oil-cake, and the new species of guano, and the other agricultural novelties.

Lord Elversfoot might have been listening attentively, but his mind was occupied with sundry calculations, which it was well for him that Mr. Leslie could not enter into. At last, following his own chain of thoughts, he turned suddenly round, and asked after Miss Leslie.

Mr. Leslie answered the question, and then hesitated; he did not know whether to treat Lord Elversfoot with confidence, and to tell him that since they had met Ida was in some degree engaged to Ernest. Had Mr. Leslie at all understood his own character, he would have learnt from this how entirely he was halting between two opinions. By a sympathy of idea he felt that the subject would not be very agreeable to Lord Elversfoot; and by the same sympathy Lord Elversfoot was aware without Mr. Leslie's having said a word on the subject, that there was a secret, and that the secret regarded Miss Leslie he fairly guessed; if so he was right in his supposition, it could only be a secret of one description—but who could be the man?

Mr. Leslie was no match for Lord Elversfoot.

"Have you any very agreeable friends in

the neighbourhood?" asked the latter, with the accent of most perfect indifference. It is the voice which generally betrays—he was a perfect master of his voice, but he uttered the words so clearly, that the subject could not be evaded.

"Why yes—no—I can't say we have, my lord. There are one or two—Mr. Vane and his sister; Mr. ——" and he was rattling on, for, strange to say, he not only felt perplexed but ashamed; such is the effect on the unpractised, of an *arrière pensée*, a secret in society, even although it is perfectly justifiable.

"Who did you say?" asked the pertinaacious marquis.

And when Mr. Leslie mentioned Ernest's name again, Lord Elversfoot saw he had hit the blot; the moment he told him that Mr. Vane had left the neighbourhood for a time, he dropped the subject. With the rapidity of a master mind, he saw the whole state of the case, as well as if Mr. Leslie had explained it all to him. That Ida was clearly attached to Ernest—that Ernest was sent away in consequence—and that Mr. Leslie was in a state of great uncertainty, divided between the interest of his vanity and his affection for his daughter.

Lord Elversfoot resolved that vanity should carry the day. When he met Ida at dinner, his fund of anecdote, his brilliant wit, his deferential and courteous attention, delighted her. Without any of her father's slavish love of rank, she had the woman's romantic admiration of all that is noble and illustrious. She was aware that the eminent man sitting next to her had filled some of the highest offices in the State, and she felt proud and flattered at the consideration he testified for her. Algitha did not appear, so Ida left the room at an early hour, leaving Lord Elversfoot and her father *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Fill your glass, my lord, we will drink 'the ladies!'"

"*Volontiers!*" said Lord Elversfoot gaily; "one of those toasts we drink from boyhood to extreme old age in bumpers."

"Then it is settled," Leslie, he added, after a pause; "you will stand for Marylebone?"

"Why, my lord," said Mr. Leslie, pushing his plate a little way from him, and leaning his elbow on the table with the air of a man determined to say a great deal to the

purpose, "I am a plain straightforward man—I should like to have a seat in Parliament—it is a very honourable ambition, besides being an agreeable and not unimportant occupation; but, Lord Elversfoot, I have never in my prosperity forgotten that I am a man sprung from the people." As he spoke, he could not refrain from casting a glance at the courtly pictures which were gazing upon him. Lord Elversfoot did not appear to follow the direction of his eyes, he merely bowed; it was not the moment to interpose, and Mr. Leslie continued—

"Yes, my lord, and I think that the title sprung from the people, is one of which a man may be justly proud. I began life with a hundred pound note, and I have achieved success. I am not ignorant, my lord, that wealth is power—I am not ignorant that there are some who worship it, but then I know, my Lord, that the House of Commons may lead me into society in which my daughter—yes, Ida—may not be received with that courtesy, with that—what shall I call it—cordiality which the child, for instance, of such a person as your Lordship would meet with. And I say fairly this would mortify me beyond measure, and the question for my serious consideration is, whether I shall subject myself to such an annoyance. I have spoken very frankly to you, my Lord, and in perfect confidence. What is your opinion?"

Lord Elversfoot threw a glow of admiration over his countenance. He appeared to remain silent from intense interest, but in reality he was collecting his mind for a reply. He was taken by surprise at the unexpected question.

"I was endeavouring to recollect," he said, after a pause, "the number of my own friends who have been raised by their industry to a high rank in the peerage. Let me see, there are not less than half a dozen peers who began life, as you did, with about 100*l.*, and are now men ennobled in their generations, and founders of a new race. I leave out the law Lords—I am speaking of men who have made their capital and their families by the honourable pursuit of commerce. You are quite right, my dear friend; it is a high praise to have sprung from the people. But there is a higher praise still, and that is to live for the people, to devote your energies and your newly-acquired wealth to procuring that political influence through which a man like you may do so much good. This is why, full of regard and of old affection for you, I advise

you to enter into an arena in which you are so capable of achieving excellence."

"I, Elversfoot, achieve fame?"

"Yes," continued his Lordship, and with raised voice, for he perceived, by the circumstance of Mr. Leslie's dropping his formal title, that his words were telling fast. "Yes, you, my dear friend. By the by, you were saying something just now about sundry apprehensions as to your reception, or rather Miss Leslie's reception, in London circles. I have already told you, that Lady Sandbeck, my sister, will be entirely at your command, but after the first introduction her aid would be quite unnecessary. I say nothing of Miss Leslie's personal qualities—let us assume that, instead of possessing those graces which made her a topic of conversation even during the few days you were in town, let us suppose that she was not likely to excite the remotest interest. Still, do you imagine that even then the same power, which has made you what you are, would not make you the equal of all those with whom you would be thrown? I do not speak of the vast advantages which wealth gives, of this princely castle, and the vast property, although God knows that these have more than their due weight in the world; but believe me that the aristocracy of this country is not ungrateful, and if they show you title deeds by which they claim their estates, they can also show you trophies won, and deeds recorded in history. Well, this aristocracy know to whom they are indebted for their greatness; they know well that it was our manufactures which broke the alliance between Napoleon and Alexander, and that if Waterloo saved England by the courage of her sons, Birmingham supplied the arms. They know well that it was English commerce which broke the force of the Berlin and Milan decrees; that the man who gave laws to almost all civilized Europe was dethroned by the humble Birmingham artizan. The sinews of a nation are the sinews of men; it is not fleets and armies, palaces and citadels, that constitute the strength of a people; it is mind, it is industry; and do you think that a man who represents that mind and that industry, and bears its evidences with him wherever he goes, can be overlooked, can be otherwise than thrice honoured?"

Lord Elversfoot had spoken warmly, and as he concluded, all the artifice of his nature left him, and he did more to promote his views in those few minutes of sincerity than he could have accomplished by hours of diplomacy.

"If all men thought like you, Elversfoot," said Leslie.

"And who is there of the Order with which you will be thrown, and to which I belong, who does not think with me? It is true that some may forget these great truths for a time; and there may be a few boobies crawling between earth and heaven, to whom such ideas would appear strange, who have never heard, or at least never will remember, that they owe to the industry of this great country those fortunes which they are squandering in dissipation or vanity,"—(and he sighed, for he thought of his son.) "But do you suppose, my dear Leslie," he continued, "that the men who influence the destiny and administer the government of this country, by whatever name they may be called, whatever party they may represent, are not keenly alive to the necessities and requirements of the times; that they do not deeply feel that the first duty of an aristocracy is towards the people, and that the aristocracy must at times be recruited from the ranks of the people? You will have read that in ancient days each settler in a new colony used to take a handful of earth from his native shore and throw it into a hole dug for the purpose, so that some portion of the old land should mingle with the new soil; thus every fresh man who enters the aristocracy from the ranks of the people brings with him some portion of his opinions; those popular opinions which, in a country whose government is based on popular institutions, are absolutely essential to enable it to sympathise with the nation. My dear Leslie, for we are speaking as confidential friends, believe me that wealth is essential to an aristocracy, for it is absolutely requisite for its preservation that it should have the means of performing its duties to the people. We are sitting in this room with the pictures of the old ancestors of the great House of Rochdale gazing upon us; the cornices, the panels of the door, every available space, is decorated with the coronets, scrolls, and crests, of a family that has now departed. Let it rest in peace, it has had its day; and now your day commences, and it may be that, with your command of capital, the comfort of the people in the neighbourhood may increase, the village spire may rise from the hitherto neglected patch of waste land—many great works, employing much labour in their progress, and testifying to a noble generosity in their completion, may date from your arrival here. Well, then, is it too bold a thing that you, who rival that an-

ERNEST VANE.

cient house in great and good deeds, in hospitality, in possessions, and in intelligence, should one day rival it in the high rank to which it attained."

Lord Elversfoot spoke with vehemence, for it was a theme on which he felt deeply, and upon which he delighted to dwell; now, at least, he believed all that he said—the old Whig is never tired of talking about the people, and imagining himself liberal. He had long been a member of that party, who, possessing the strongest aristocratic tendencies, march in cloth of gold, with "the People" inscribed on their banners. The thorough aristocratic Whig; the party of hereditary principles of freedom, both in trade and institutions; the class that would do everything for the people, and nothing by the people—at once haughty and condescending,—universal and exclusive—who would desire to see every poor man's table well supplied, but take equal care that he should never trespass above the salt; who bow very low, extend forefingers, to the middle-class—shake hands with the people, but always with their gloves on; who will tell you that the middle-class, the bourgeoisie, is essential to the well-being of the country, but draw themselves up very high if the middle-class ever assert the smallest position in their presence; a party composed in general of men of high illustration, and of unblemished race, who view their society with the same reverence as the Jews were wont to regard the inner circle of the Temple; who have an undeviating attachment to the tales of family interests and family claims, and the traditions of their history, as written by their own party, with whom it is a faith to worship the memory of the traitors William Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney, and to repudiate Dalrymple's Memoirs; who practice in religion an universal toleration; who in rare instances, as Lord Elversfoot said, are willing to admit a select few of the middle-class into their society, but would at the same time keep back the crowd which is treading on their heels; who speak of commerce and manufactures with all reverence, and honour those who have attained pre-eminence in life through their own industry, but who would be greatly astonished if any one of those persons approached them with familiarity, and did not apply to their manners such terms as "condescending" and "affable."

Such was Lord Elversfoot, and by no means a bad specimen of the class; a man with

whom all persons were proud to be acquainted, and to salute as friend, whose whole public career had been characterized by undeviating rectitude, and yet he was so entirely a man of a certain fashion of the world, that he had adopted, and permitted his son to adopt, all its habits and opinions as his code of morality. Himself a man of ton at one-and-twenty, White's and Brookes's were to him what the fountain of Egeria was to Numa, the sources whence he imbibed all his worldly wisdom; a man of action, with his time constantly employed, he had rarely himself been led away into extreme dissipation; but he made the fatal error, the error so common to all men, of attributing to their children precisely the same qualities, the same tendencies, which they themselves possess. The consequence was, that Luttrell had been brought up in the same set, and was for some time much liked in it. Older men were amused at a lad who at fifteen called for seltzer and sherry instead of champagne, and packed up his portmantau the second day he visited a friend's house in the country, because he found that every bottle of wine was corked; who at sixteen had an intrigue with a woman old enough to be his mother, and was threatened with an action for damages. The old club *habitués* applauded these feats; and his father, while he shook his head, smiled at the same time.

So on went Luttrell, and yet no one was more astonished or enraged than Lord Elversfoot, when he understood upon his son's coming of age that he had mortgaged half his fortune to the Jews. Lord Elversfoot had much too great self-command to storm or rave; his anger was always patrician and aristocratic; he quietly communicated to Luttrell what his opinion was, and then told him he would raise the money to relieve him from his present embarrassment; that, in order to do this, he should have to reduce the whole of his establishment, and practice every kind of self-denial; that he was quite willing to make this sacrifice for his son, but that if the same thing occurred again, the only course would be to make him pay the penalty of his own folly. If Lord Elversfoot had reflected he would have owned that he himself was only paying the penalty of the vicious education he had given his son. He had educated him solely for the world, and he found him in all things imitating the worst models of the world. He found out, when it was too late, that it might be said of his son's heart as Pompey said when he entered the Holiest of Holies at

Jerusalem :—"Nulla intus deum vestigia vacuum sedem et inania arcana;" and he it was who had removed from that temple the holy things, and made his mind a wild sierra, and because he was fêted in society, and bright women and maidens as fair as the summer morning smiled upon him, and pronounced him *un enfant gâté*; because he saw him associating with men themselves worthy of high consideration, he thought the boy was, in spite of all his follies, at heart just, truthful, and honourable. But we are told that the rank bush of the tropical climes so nearly resembles the fresh purple heather of the north, it is scarcely possible to distinguish them; thus, in the whirl of society, it is hard to separate the great from the unworthy, the chivalrous from the mean, the gallant from the coward; and it is not until some slight circumstance occurs to remove the veil, that the eyes of men are opened to the truth.

But about six months before this time a circumstance had occurred which showed Lord Elversfoot what was Luttrell's real character. He overheard two men talking in the club one day, about a man who had not paid a debt of honour, and he soon heard quite enough to prove to him that they were speaking of his son, who had dishonoured his race, and tarnished his name. He lost no time in sending for him, and it was with withering contempt that he upbraided him for the disgraceful act; an explanation ensued, and it was then impossible for him any longer to conceal the ruin which was impending over him. His father relented, and again assisted him in his difficulties, but upon the condition that he should immediately exchange from the Guards to a marching regiment; he also made him promise that in the event of his being able to arrange a marriage with any heiress, he would not hesitate at once to sacrifice his affections or his prejudices in order to restore his ancient house to that position which it had lost by the extravagance of three generations; and Luttrell had agreed to everything that was demanded from him.

When Lord Elversfoot had ceased speaking, Mr. Leslie thought that he had never listened to more glorious eloquence; here was a great magnate, who expressed in glowing language all those ideas which had long been lurking in Mr. Leslie's own breast. In order to believe a thing firmly, we must not only be convinced of it ourselves, but that conviction must be confirmed by the opinion of others. Mr. Leslie rose from table with the firm be-

lief that Ambition was indeed a virtue; and when his guest had retired to rest, it was with greater pride than he had ever yet felt that he paced the long spacious galleries of the castle; and, as the echo of his footsteps was prolonged, he gazed around him on all those monuments of past greatness by which he was surrounded; and what was the moral that they taught him? not the vanity of worldly ambition, the utter insignificance of the oldest dynasties,—but to vie with those who had preceded him, to emulate their greatness, and to leave behind him, when he should have long mouldered in the grave, the picture of the founder of a new family surmounted with a coronet.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALGITHA had never breathed to Ida the name of the man who had so bitterly deceived her.

There are secrets which cannot be uttered to even the dearest friend; secrets which, like the first prayers we lisp, are never heard but by the one by whose side we are kneeling. Most people have once in life possessed such a secret, and respected it. Algitha could not mention Luttrell's name; for she knew that Ida would hold it evermore in detestation, and she could not endure to hear him ill spoken of, or her whole worst suspicions confirmed; cruel as he had been towards her, she cherished that name which had fallen from her in the melting accents of love. It was a pledge to her of never-to-be-forgotten moments of happiness, at the recollection of which her heart grew full of emotion; it seemed as if each syllable contained a spell which forbade her lips ever to utter it; the letters in the word Alfred exercised as powerful an influence over her heart as the name of Phœbus did on Esmeralda's; once or twice, in those instants of agony which overcame her, when she could no longer conceal from herself the heartless conduct of Luttrell, she was on the point, in the midst of her anguish and anger, of telling all. But an inward power restrained her; she controlled her emotion, and immediately relapsed into her former state of reserve. She could not speak ill of the man she had trusted, or reproach a heart that had been devoted to her. She had made her love her god, had worshipped at that altar, and would not now profane it; she had been deceived by that countenance that had lured her by its beauty—like those still and dimpling lakes

which reflect in mimic loveliness the varied beauties of the flowers which grow upon their margin, and entice the young blossoms to bend towards the water, yet let them rot upon the surface when the leaves fall upon their bosom.

Agony of agony, a confidence uncompleted, a half revelation, the greatest of all misery is an inarticulated utterance; when everything is told, the heart is in some measure relieved. The garrulity of grief is its safety. The expression of anger is the pledge of forgiveness. If Algitha had told everything to Ida, if the latter could not have consoled her, she would at least have enacted the friend's best part in listening to her. Sympathy is the only medicine for extreme grief, and the sympathy of silence is the most touching of all.

And it had been far happier for Ida, as well as for Algitha herself, if the latter had told her the whole truth. At the time, it is true that Ida knew so little of Lord Elversfoot and his family, that she would probably not have discerned that the present Lord Linton was the same person she had heard mentioned as Luttrell. Algitha, when at Beaumaris, had asked no questions about Luttrell's family. She had once or twice heard him mention Lord Linton's name, but her mind was too absorbed in himself to pay much attention to it; still if Ida had once mentioned the name, she could not have failed to have recognized it again; but Ida was very reserved upon the subject. She perceived that Algitha took little interest in general conversation, for when Ida lavished praises on Lord Elversfoot's manner, on the kindness of his smile, on the refinements of his address, Algitha listened like one in a dream. She was dreaming of Luttrell.

Lord Elversfoot left after two or three days, having received Mr. Leslie's promise to be put into nomination for Marylebone, and to come to town in a very short time. He had fairly started him in the great race of ambition, and Mr. Leslie was now prepared to rush forward with headlong rapidity. The castle, his local greatness, his extensive possessions, all seemed to him as nothing, compared to the success of public life, and the dignity of its honours. He pondered on all that Lord Elversfoot had said, until he really believed that he had a diploma of greatness; that his greatness was essential to the well-being of the country. Ida was at first surprised, almost distressed, to see the difference in her father's manner after Lord Elversfoot's departure. He took no longer any interest in all

his improvements. He wandered about the castle with his attention fixed on the old pictures and the ancient blazonments.

One day she approached him when he was in this mood. He was standing in the long gallery, wrapped in his thoughts. She crept silently behind him and touched his arm. He started.

"You are becoming quite a painter, papa," she said. "I always see you now admiring these pictures."

There was much meaning in his smile, as he replied, "I was thinking where they could be put away."

"Put them away, my dearest papa, why would you do that? They are the greatest ornament of the castle. Look at these Vandykes, what can be more admirable? Some of the strangers, when they come here to see the castle, pass an hour in looking at this picture, and you talk of putting it away."

"You like to possess the pictures of great men?"

"I don't know, papa, what you mean by great men. Lord Elversfoot all people about here call a very great man, and yet I should not care to have his picture. It seems to me that a person, to be really great, must have played such a part in life that his actions form our own minds, and influence our own age, and that it is not until then that his picture can be very interesting to us. Look at these three—Charles the First, and Strafford, and Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland. I could gaze on them for ever."

Her enthusiasm was not misplaced. Vandyke is the real historian of Charles the First, because he has bequeathed to posterity the man as well as the king. No romance, however highly wrought, no history, however faithful in its narrative, can convey to our minds the same impressions of this great monarch as Vandyke's pictures. There we behold the sad and solemn feature, the deep lines of heroic suffering, that soft and gentle tinge of melancholy which told of a youth of romance and passion; we see him first in his prime of life, when with Buckingham he broke through the formalities of court etiquette to visit in disguise and unattended the Infanta of Spain; when, as Clarendon tells us, there was not a gentle heart that did not thrill at his name, or a fair cheek that did not blush with consciousness at his glance; when Olivarez and the grandees of Spain, who had a right to be covered in the presence of their own monarchs, uncovered in his, and all the

prisons of Spain, as it were in the mockery of history, were thrown open to him; to him alas! so soon to be a prisoner himself. We see him as he rode at Naseby, magnificent in adversity, great even in defeat, when he exclaimed, "One charge more, and we have recovered the day!" and when, even in the moment of supreme sorrow, he could abstract his mind from his own griefs and perils to commiserate a wounded soldier. Some may prefer him as he sits calm, firm, unflinching on his war-horse, in the armour of the time, with his white plume fluttering in the breeze, holding the baton of marshal of his own armies, wearing the insignia of that royalty whose privileges he only too fondly cherished; others, again, as he is described, discrowned, but never dishonoured; he, the greatest sovereign, the most admirable gentleman that England ever saw, lying in prison, despised and rejected, when he, in the fulness of his soul, burst forth in the following immortal stanzas—

The Puritan and Presbyterian seed
Vie with hot haste to make religion bleed,
To ruin Prelacy, their only creed.

But, sacred Saviour, with thy words I woo
Thee to forgive, and not be bitter to
Those whom thou knowest do not know what they do.

For since they from the Lord are so disjoined,
Not to respect the edicts he appointed,
How can they reverence the Lord's Anointed?

Augment my patience, nullify my hate,
Preserve my issue, and inspire my mate;
Yet though we perish, bless this Church and State.

or lastly as Charles the sacred Martyr, on that terrible January morning, when with the young duke on his knee he charged him to love his sovereign and bear no hatred to the people. Even this fearful moment is recorded by the great master's pencil,—the only one worthy to approach so great and awful a subject.

And ever by the side of Charles stands the stern, dark, uncompromising Strafford, near his beloved master in the historic gallery as he ever was near him in life; but with his picture, alas! so placed that it always casts a slight shadow over the monarch's.

Such were the pictures that arrested Ida's gaze.

"Yes; but I don't mean these," said Mr. Leslie, after a pause. "I was alluding to the family pictures; for, while they remain here, it never seems to me that the castle fairly be-

longs to us. Oh, I shall certainly take them away, and——"

"Hang up what instead?" asked Ida.

There was something silly in Mr. Leslie's smile as he replied, "I shall have my picture taken as soon as I get to London, and have it hung in this place;" and he pointed to the portrait of the first Earl of Rochdale.

"But then," said the pertinacious Ida, "you can put this portrait somewhere else. Really, papa, it would be too great a shame to remove them altogether."

But his only reply was a pettish monosyllable, and he then turned to walk away. Ida did not understand what was passing in his mind. She did not see the change that had come over his spirit; that the pictures were hateful to him, because they reminded him of the great gulph which separated him from the persons they represented in the social scale; that, as he approached nearer that class, the ambition which had taken root in his heart expanded; for ambition is a growing plant, whose tendrils creep from each attainment to fresh objects with never-failing strength. Happily for her, she had not yet perceived that he was in any way changed towards her; and yet she was some day to learn that another object had risen in his heart, to divide his affections. She saw him frequently deep in thought, abstracted, and sometimes anxious; but she attributed it all to matter-of-fact reasons. So it always is; the last persons to explain a difference of character or conduct are those with whom we are living on most intimate terms. A stranger would soon have perceived the change and divined the reason. Lord Elversfoot had done his work well.

But then Ida, it is true, was at this time almost always with Algitha. All her efforts could not recall the smile to those lips, nor the bloom to the cheek; but it in some measure consoled her to hear her voice, for in its saddest mood that voice was warm and affectionate. She seemed to be linked to Algitha in her present grief, as an omen that their lives would hereafter be associated together.

The hour that was to part them, however, drew near; the hour that was to open a new world of ideas, of character, of opinion, to Ida; that hour in general which is so eagerly anticipated by the young; when the truth of dreams gorgeous as Eastern palaces, and golden-hued as Eastern skies, is to be tested; when the influence of voices and flattery is to be proved; when the sympathy of a young

heart, uncontrolled save by the forms and fashions of society (those forms and fashions so powerful in their effects on the weak, on the passionless, and on the yielding, but so impotent to restrain the flow of a strong, impetuous, passionate will), is to go in search of a kindred sympathy. As yet Ida had but little zest for that pursuit of pleasure in which she was to embark. Her affections were centred in Ernest and Algitha; and when the heart is concentrated in any feeling, the movement of the world only affects the mind like coloured figures in a panorama passing before it. Simple in her tastes, and ever looking beyond the din of the world, she had attained by her constitution the same point that many arrive at after much practice in life, and after great philosophy and forethought. Thus it is that forest-trees and the simplest flowers both look heaven-ward.

And the hour was also approaching when Algitha was to meet her brother. The dread of that hour had divided her thoughts with the recollection of Luttrell. She felt disposed to flee; for she knew that he must read her countenance at the first interview, and that her melancholy could not be long concealed from him. She knew little of his movements; for he did not tell her when he wrote where he had been passing the intervening period. His last letter was dated from London, and in it he spoke of a most interesting visit he had paid, of which he would give her the full particulars on his return. He wrote in a reserved style, which filled Algitha with alarm lest in his absence he might have heard some rumours of the events which had occurred at Beaumaris; but it was not the case. Had he told her where he had retired to on his road to town, she would have comprehended the grave character of his letters. As it was, she had no alternative but to precipitate her own fate, and write to the address Ernest gave her in London; and when the letter was sealed and sent, that letter which mentioned the day which was to deprive her of her friend and counsellor, and expose her to the scrutinizing observation of a most indulgent but observant brother, the orphan fell upon her knees and wept aloud.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Ernest left Wimbourne he was in one of those melancholy moods which test the tempers and the depth of character in men. Some rush into society, and even into intemperance, in the endeavour to rid themselves

of the depression which weighs upon them; this is the greatest of all errors, for if you are suffering, it is far better to yield to the torrent than to endeavour to stem it; to fold your arms quietly, and wait for day. Others find relief in solitude, in the memory of happy hours, in the anticipations and hopes of the future. Ernest had that great advantage over many men which results from habits of reflection and observation, and which in some degree places a man above the accidents of life. He possessed that love of nature which always distinguishes the man of taste. Of botany, of geology, of natural history he was wholly ignorant; but he could wander among the wild flowers of the forest, and marvel at those gardens not made by any living hand. He had ever cast from his heart that devilish and heartless philosophy, whose principal mission we are told is to destroy all prejudices; that is to say, which teaches man that he is only made of flesh and blood, and that life ends with its decay; that school of despair founded by the Encyclopædists of the last century, the first elements of whose faith (if such a term can be applied to it) is to rob a man of all the ideas which he most deeply cherishes, and make him disbelieve all that is not strictly visible and material. The education of Ernest had been of that grave character which leaves its impress on a whole life; but for his own happiness, that education was far too exclusive. He remembered in very early life overhearing his first tutor remark, "Poor child, he will be very unhappy in life; he is too sensitive."

For such a disposition the greatest of all misfortunes is to nourish an exclusive and passionate attachment for a being at once frail and dependent, from whom a thousand events may separate him, and whom death, at all events, is ever at hand to snatch from him. Such an affection, however pure, however noble, will ever be to a man of this temperament a source of inevitable torment; and even if it can be preserved without remorse, it will never be exempt from harassing anxieties. Ernest thought he had never felt so utterly wretched as that morning when he sauntered along on horseback to the neighbouring town. In such a frame of mind the slightest circumstances have a powerful influence upon the heart. It so chanced, that, as he cast his eyes round the surrounding country, they were attracted to the farthest point of a distant hill range, where he remembered that there was a celebrated Trap-

pist monastery founded about the year 1800 by some Irish Roman Catholics. It was situated in a very wild district, in a part of the country which had formerly been an extensive forest; but the trees had mostly disappeared, and rocks, stones, and black mosses were alone left there. It had been long his intention to visit this monastery, and he was precisely in the frame of mind to indulge in solitary and gloomy fancies; besides, there was a novelty in the idea, which pleased while it occupied his fancy. He had ever been forcibly impressed with the greatness of that faith which more than any other appeals to the affections and connects the breathing man with

The loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead;

which raises men above the sphere of their ordinary fellow beings, and chases despair from anguish. On this occasion Ernest resolved to gratify his imagination; he knew that there was a visitors' room there to which strangers were always welcome; besides, he had on a former occasion been accidentally thrown into the society of the present venerable Prior. He hired a small carriage at the town where he had sent his luggage, and desired to be driven to the monastery. After they left the high road, the way became very rough, and it was intersected by a variety of cross paths; here and there a half broken and moss-grown sign-board pointed out the road to some distant village; Ernest had at moments to leave the carriage and walk, for the heaps of loose stones and broken soil prevented it advancing at more than a foot pace; it was quite evident that the road was very little frequented. At a sudden turning the monastery broke upon the view, with its irregular pile, built of the same material as the rock was composed of; it appeared as though it were some strange fantastic shape which nature had assumed; the red light of evening cast a lurid glow over the whole landscape; no sound broke the silence save the low solemn monotony of the convent bell tolling for vespers; there was something in the solitude, in the silence, in the almost solemnity of the scene, which at any other moment would have oppressed his spirits, but in his present frame of mind it only softened and subdued them. As Ernest approached the convent, he perceived on each side signs of increasing cultivation; it was literally a war with the wilderness; but man had conquered; there were gardens, and corn-fields,

and orchards, from within half a mile of the convent on either side up to the very walls. As for the building itself, one wing consisted of a chapel and a range of offices, surmounted with sundry crosses; in the other wing was a large, coarse, simple building; but withal conveying some idea of ecclesiastical architecture. However rude and imperfect, the building, as a whole, had evidently been erected at different periods and under different managements. Behind the convent were some chambers scooped out of the hollow rock, which seemed to be appropriated as store-rooms. It was, on the whole, a very melancholy looking edifice, well calculated to inspire sad and serious thoughts; but the adjacent scenery lent its silent influence to its effect, for, no one could wander long through that forest, or scramble amongst those rocks, without being impressed with a certain sense of the power of local associations. It was pre-eminently a spot where a man should retire from the world to contain himself. It was quite evident, however, that the principle of that community was labour, for in some spots, where there was literally nothing but rocks, soil had been brought from a great distance; there were also patches of pasture, but so small, that they bore testimony to the indefatigable exertions of the labourers in the vineyard.

Ernest drew near the convent, but not without awe, and when he rang the bell, it reverberated through the whole building. In a few minutes the footsteps of one of the monks might be heard echoing through the cloisters; he approached Ernest with the peculiar courtesy of the old Irish priest; it required but a very few words of explanation for Ernest to be at once welcomed within those walls. The brethren were at that moment at vespers, and he was requested to await the arrival of the Prior in a small room, hung round with the portraits of the founders of the Cistercian order,—Saint Barnard and Saint Benoit, and the famous head of La Trappe, Armand Jean, the Abbé de Rancé.

Ernest stood quite absorbed before the picture of that great and good man; that man, who, in his own person and in his own practice, had borne testimony to the world's vanity, and to man's resolution. The picture on which he gazed was divided into two compartments; one depicted the Abbé de Rancé, at the time when he was the favourite of Marie de Medicis, and the spoiled lover of the whole Court, dressed after the description of Lenain,

in a just-au-corps of the richest velvet, embroidered with gold; silk violet-coloured stockings fitting to perfection; the most fashionable cravat of point lace; his long locks, which he always refused, from the extreme of vanity, to powder, falling in luxurious curls on his shoulders; his sleeves, slashed and covered with emerald buttons, and his fingers loaded with rings; rivalling every courtier in courtly graces, and at the same time successfully competing with the hitherto unrivalled Bossuet in a contest of eloquence; the owner of delicious Veret, in the beautiful Touraine, and of the bright Lordship of Claye; admirable in every variety of accomplishment, having astonished at the age of sixteen the Hôtel de Rambouillet by his discourses; made doctor of the Sorbonne, and promoted to the bishopric of Laon, out of compliment to the variety of his theological knowledge; who, when he was only thirteen, published in the same year a Greek edition of Anacreon, and a treatise on the Excellence of the Soul. At one moment he might be found disputing in temples, delivering a philosophical thesis; at another, he was the promoter of every political quarrel, and the great agitator of the Fronde, being the friend of Châteauneuf, of the Duchess de Chevreuse, and Montresor, and even of the famous Duc de Beaufort, le Roi des Halles. Such he was when he headed the party of the Montbazons, the de la Tremouilles, the de la Forces, de Rohans, d'Harcourts, de Villiers, and de Noailles, the descendants of the greatest aristocracy that Europe has ever witnessed; renowned in chivalry where all were chivalrous, illustrious among so many illustrations, so soon, alas! to be swept away with all their light-heartedness, their wild gaiety, their joyous vivacity, into the dark vale of revolution. Within this same compartment, as it were for warning and example, was represented in a picture supposed to be hanging against the wall, one of those hideous saturnalia so common at that period of French history, and it seemed as though the artist, in the bitterness of his anguish, or the fulness of his repentance, had exhausted his powers in depicting the fearful scene; it described the masked carnival at the opera-house; its blaze of light, the whirl of dissipation, the bright dresses, the grotesque figures, the bold and wanton attitudes of those who were always wooed in those days like Danae by showers of gold, the wan cheek, the passionate eye, were depicted with an accuracy painful as it was surprising; who

could look at this picture without reflecting that all the bodies there represented were now dust; and that the blaze and the glory of their day was as a tale that has been told? Thus ever is it; to each man, his punishment; to each grandeur, its intimate grief; to beauty fresh and sparkling, its first wrinkle; to ambition growing high like forest wood, its axe and its decay; to wit, its faltering languid utterance; to intelligence, its weakness and dotage; and to all things, the grave.

Such was the moral of the picture, before which Ernest stood, wrapped in intense interest, for with a slight line of division between them on the opposite side, the Abbé of Rancé was represented when on the point of leaving La Trappe for Rome, in 1664, to uphold the Etroite Observance in opposition to Claude Vausin. No longer the De Rancé, the lover of Madame Montbazon, with his splendid equipages, his prancing horses, his luxurious dissipation, his costly costume; but De Rancé, after having sold all his possessions, and resigned every preferment for the solitude of La Trappe, that "*Domus Dei, beati qui habitant in ea.*" He was supposed to be kneeling before a treasure which he accidentally found while digging in the garden, at the very moment when this journey, which raised the order to so great importance, was about to be postponed for want of funds to undertake it. In the corner of this picture was also a vignette, but far different to the other; it represented the funeral service for a dead brother, and the corpse was supposed to be lying, pale and emaciated, in the centre of the church; here also were lights, and flowers, and ornaments, but all consecrated to the service of religion; so we find, that all that is beautiful in art and graceful in form belongs alike to the world visible and the invisible; to the man and to the soul; to material existence and to faith.

He was not tired of contemplating this picture when the Prior entered, and Ernest was at once captivated by his appearance; so courteous, for the secret of courtesy is the entire absence of self; so kind, for the secret of kindness is to feel the highest degree of interest in another, he at once acceded to Ernest's request to be permitted to reside there for two or three days, and showed him immediately to the strangers' room, where he left him, merely hinting a wish that he should in some slight observances conform to the customs of the order while he remained under their roof.

Ernest conversed in the course of the evening with the Prior, and the guest-master, in whose favour the rule of silence is relaxed; he had expected to find men who had lost sight of all those customs and refinements which are so essential to the intercourse of civilized life; how greatly was he astonished to see the attention paid to his slightest wish, the consideration which he met with; they lit his fire, brought him a store of linen, and a good dinner; the great object seemed to be that he should want for nothing; and as they served him they thanked him, because, as they expressed it, there is so much happiness in obliging others. His own room was comfortable without being luxurious; nothing could exceed the cleanliness and neatness; the furniture consisted of the ordinary appurtenance of a bed-room, but in addition there was a prie-Dieu, with a crucifix attached to it, while on the table lay some of the Fathers of the Church; and round the walls of the room were hung prints of the martyrs who had bled for the Faith.

It was midnight, when he was disturbed by the bell tolling for one of the great festivals of the Roman Catholic Church. Ernest awoke from that sleep in which visions of Ida had been blended with dark and solemn forms, just as the rays of light are lost in mist and darkness. He opened the window, and looked out on the wild waste of rock which far and wide extended below him, where in the distance the lights of the neighbouring town might be discerned; and as he contrasted the bustle of the market-day, when he had passed through Loughborough that morning, with this severe solitude, he started at the change. And then his mind reverted to Ida; he almost thought, as with straining eye-balls he strove to pierce the gloom of night, he could trace the outline of that castle where all his heart was garnered up; he looked round him again; the moon was shining on the metallic rock, whose keen sharp points rose like magnetic needles to catch the glory of the night, and gleamed like burnished steel. The wind blew freely round the mountain brow, and whistled with melancholy sigh through the enclosure; it seemed to Ernest the most solemn night he had ever witnessed; but it was his heart that was in a solemn mood; he had seen many such nights before, but they had passed by unnoticed. He dressed himself hurriedly, and followed the passage to the chapel; when he entered, there he found two rows of monks, some in brown and others in white robes,

standing on either side of the choir; a small lamp was suspended from the ceiling, which scarcely sufficed to illuminate the chapel; there was something inexpressibly awful in that dim religious light, which only served to cast a faint and sickly gleam on the painted windows and the glorious altar-piece; the chant was low and solemn, such as the night wind makes when it whistles through tombstones; and the bodies of the monks as they chanted bent and bowed like the branches of trees. In addition to the festival of the Church, it was a burial-service, for a brother had died that day; so, when the service was over, the Superior took Ernest by the hand and led him to the grave-yard. He willingly followed his guide, for a strange fascination crept over him; he passed through many cloisters of simple ecclesiastical architecture, round which the moonbeams were chasing the shadows of the passing figures; near the small dark burial-ground itself, the cloister was of the rudest workmanship. Around a grave (which had been dug when the last brother died, for at La Trappe a new grave is always ready) all the brethren were kneeling; they looked like spirits ominous and dark in the flickering moonlight; and high above their sad monotony of voice was heard the tolling for the dead. In this spot, redeemed from the ancient forest, in this solitude of terror, he who in life despised the world was to repose for eternity; he lay on the ground with his hands clasped across his bosom. The Prior took a crucifix and pressed it to the lips of the dead, as though to inspire them with a living faith; and, in truth, it was a moment and a scene when the most sceptical might almost have believed in a miracle. Long, thin, and rank grew the grass; cold and blue were the surrounding walls; unhealthy and withered were the branches of the single tree which grew in the centre of the burial-ground. Ernest looked on in fear and trembling; to him the scene was replete with awe, but of that strange awe which so fascinates the mind, that it is impossible to leave the spot. He remained there until the whole service was finished, until the last sod had been put on the grave, and the small wooden cross at its head, and then the workers turned to another spot, and, blessing the ground, dug another grave; the new ground was heaped up on either side—who was to occupy that? The monks, with pale but earnest faces, toiled at it like a labour of love, and, when it was completed, they rose in mournful and solemn procession to depart; and as

each passed by Ernest he bent his glance upon him, and the lips slightly trembled as in the act of murmuring a prayer for his soul; the bell ceased, the cloister was deserted, and not until then the breeze might be heard murmuring among the blades of the long rank grass.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was late when Ernest rose; the excitement of the previous evening had quite worn him out. From his window his eye could trace the shadowy outline of Castle Melwood; and he pondered long upon the past—he contrasted the life he had been leading with the occupation of these men—he marvelled at the variety of existences which men pursue, and all so ignorant of the life which the others are leading, and yet so apt to form opinions and judgments upon it. The guest-master brought him his breakfast, with a message from the Prior, that he proposed afterwards taking a walk with Ernest. This was precisely what Ernest desired; he was anxious to know more of a man who could voluntarily renounce all the excitement, and what he would consider its enjoyments, for an existence of solitude and devotion. The scene of the last evening had left a most painful impression on his mind; he thought he still heard the deep-toned bell, and those melancholy voices which gave a sad and sorrowful accent even to the "*Beati quorum remissæ sunt iniquitates*,"—it was like a voice speaking to him from another world. If such men, he thought, could be happy and cheerful, was not the secret of happiness in life summed up in two words—obligation and duty; and wherewithal in life should he be able to fulfil these? He was in this mood when the Father came to him, and they walked forth together. As they left the gate, Ernest saw groups of people wending their way towards the convent, by the various by-paths that intersected the rock. On inquiring, he found that they were poor of the neighbourhood, who all received some daily relief, and that the rule was that no one should ever be turned away unassisted.

"We have relieved, in one year," said his guide, "no less than thirty-two thousand persons. All the incomes of the brethren, and the whole profits of their work, are employed in acts of charity, and we undertake by turns the pleasing duty of dispensing it; and yet," continued he, with a kind smile, "there are many in this neighbourhood who regard us ra-

ther as evil spirits than as ministers of good. This feeling at first existed even among the poor, but now there is not one of these persons whom you see who do not love us, and at last believe that it is not our sole object in life to make converts. I am not ignorant," continued the old man, "of all that is passing in the world. My communications with other establishments of a similar nature give me a great insight into the workings of the people's mind; our ministrations are not confined to these walls; we have, in the especial love of the humblest of God's children, relaxed the rules of the order. You will find the brethren at the bedside of sickness, breathing spiritual consolation to the dying, and preaching not our own articles of religion, but those doctrines which are common to all Churches upon earth. I tell you, sir," and here he laid his hand impressively on Ernest's shoulder, "there is a great danger menaces our country—it is the want of religious earnestness."

"And yet," interrupted Ernest, "I cannot help feeling that it is the strong sense of religion in this country which has alone saved it from anarchy and bloodshed, when all other surrounding nations have been shaken to their foundations. I have often visited the manufacturing towns, and when I consider the state of things passing around us, my astonishment is not that human society is ever menaced, but that it so long subsists; not that the destitute and ignorant form themselves into bands of Socialists, Chartists, or by whatever Republican denomination they may be designated—(but all with one object in view, the destruction of our social system)—but that they have so long suffered in silence. I always thought it was religion alone which prevented the people rising from the depths of their misery to overturn all our institutions, all classes, all degrees, as the ground is turned over with a spade;" and Ernest's voice warmed as he continued: "Can any one for a moment suppose that if the masses thought there was nothing beyond this life, no reward in another world for Lazarus, no punishment for Dives, that they could preserve themselves from the action of despair when they look abroad and perceive the unequal distribution of property; that they would see their own families starving; listen to the faint inarticulate sobs of expiring misery, and be satisfied, when great men, rolling along in all the pomp and circumstance of wealth, show them in explanation musty parchments and strange old-fashioned deeds, through which they

claim exemption from all the ills of life? I ask, is there any country in which the extremes of wealth and poverty are so apparent as in England? How often, within the same small circle, do we not find the luxurious palace and the squalid hovel, the bed of fine linen and the pallet of reeking straw? Almost within hearing of each other, there is the soft voice of delicate curtailed love, and the plaintive cry of famishing anguish; rarely can the sound of music be heard at night, that the notes do not echo round the wretched cabins of those who keep watch in sickness and in sorrow, and whose distress is illuminated by the flood of light which flows from the abode of elegance and refinement. It were at once ill-judging and unjust to reflect on the conduct of the noble and the wealthy; for while no country presents such fearful contrasts as I have described, there is upon the other hand none where the upper classes devote themselves so entirely to the good of their fellow-creatures. The evil is not to be imputed to them; it is to be found in the too rapid accumulation of great fortunes, and the consequent increase of large classes of paupers—in the reckless hurry to be rich, which has sprung up amongst us—in the contempt of all mediocrity—in vanity. I allude to this subject,” continued Ernest, impressively, “because you appear, sir, to apprehend evils from the condition of the labouring classes, whereas I think that the past should give us good hope that we may frankly rely on their honesty of purpose, on their sense of religious obligation. But I am speaking more particularly of the lowest class of the patient suffering poor, of those who cannot mourn when a loved member of their little circle is removed by death, because it is one mouth the less to feed.”

“Your words are full of kindness, and show a warm and feeling heart, Mr. Vane,” said the good man; “but there is still a want of religious earnestness and religious charity. Take, for instance, the feelings entertained against this institution; they are worthier of Illiberis than Ancyra, of Spain than Galatia. We are spoken of with contempt by those who have never studied wherein our faith differs from their own; and there are men who would persecute others for some trifling form, just as I have read that furious contests were excited in the fourth century between those who spelled ‘homoousian’ without a diphthong, and those who spelled it ‘homoiousian.’ I am not now alluding to our Church;

that Church unhappily at one time represented persecution, and the hatred which persecution engenders remains when the active cause has long since ceased to exist, so we must be content to be hated in this country; but I speak of a body of the Protestant Church, who have within the last few years given great energy to your Church, and done great good in the service of religion. Why are these men subject to contumely, and spoken of as apostates? It has been written to me that in a town in the west of England there was an orphan girl, who with some other friends devoted herself to succouring the poor in their affliction, to praying by the bed-side of the dying, and performing in gentlest fashion all sweet and holy duties; but because in their house there was an oratory, and that oratory was decorated with flowers, and a small crucifix was placed on an altar, the people rose up against these ministers of good, and heaped insults upon them. Is not this persecution, Mr. Vane?”

“It is worse than the persecutions of old; for at least there was some palliation for these in the violent shock of opinions, and in the necessity for self-defence,” replied Ernest.

“I remember,” continued the Prior, “the language in which this excellent lady explained her reason for putting flowers in the oratory, and for wearing crosses. She said, ‘Friends gave us some flowers. Some of the Sisters, when the day’s labour was over, amused themselves in twining a wreath, and placed it on the cross. Men may think it a frivolous act, but to us it is natural. Women may give their whole heart to God and his poor, to labour for them; but we are women still, and have women’s tastes. We still love flowers and pictures. We have done with gay dresses, for they are expensive, and would be a mockery to the poor; but we like the brightness and gaiety of flowers, and friends give them to us; why may we not use them as we will! And when, perhaps, too weary with our day’s work to do anything else, why may we not plait a wreath of flowers, and think of the unfading crowns in heaven? But we wear crosses; and what lady does not? And if there may be a cross on the Queen’s crown—if ladies may wear crosses of diamonds, pearls, and rubies in courts and assemblies, who shall grudge us our simple wooden crosses?’

“It was beautifully and truly said,” remarked Ernest.

“And when such things can be, when such bigots are to be found in this age of im-

provement and civilization, am I not right in saying that the danger in this country is a want of faith? Yes," he continued, after a pause, "I tremble for the future—for you, and all like you, who are embarking in troubled waters. Everything is shaken around you; crowns are falling off, and thrones are crumbling. Faith is lost; human reason has outstepped its appointed limits, and civilisation falls by its own hand."

"It is a terrible prospect," said Ernest.

"But now, can you understand, Mr. Vane," said the old man, greatly moved, "that, apart from religious considerations—from matters of faith—there may be some merit in people retiring from the world as we have done to feed others by the practice of our self-denial; that in feeding thirty thousand persons, we have done something towards relieving the misery of which you have so forcibly complained, and obviating its evil effects? At least, we should not be persecuted or reviled because our faith differs from that of the majority."

"It appears to me," said Ernest, for they were returning to the convent, "that there is one word which should be written over every portal and engraven on every heart; and that is, Toleration."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ERNEST passed two or three days in strolling about that wild and interesting district; he left the convent with regret, and a deep feeling of kindness towards those who had received him so hospitably. Notwithstanding the good that they performed, he could not avoid lamenting that they should take so mistaken a view of the obligations of life, and therefore circumscribe the sphere of their usefulness; but he had learned one lesson there, and that was, the duty of toleration towards others—a very important lesson to him, who was not naturally very tolerant in his opinions. From Loughborough he went to London; and it was there that he received from Algitha an account of Lord Elversfoot's visit to Melwood, and mentioning the day on which Mr. Leslie and Ida might be expected to arrive in London. Ernest was in great doubt at first if he should remain to see Ida for one day, or whether Mr. Leslie would not think it a breach of the understanding into which they had entered; and, as frequently happens, he having determined on remaining, the question was otherwise decided for him, for Mr. Leslie found that he should have to go round by

Liverpool, and remain there two or three days; and Ernest did not like to leave Algitha so long alone at Wimbourne. He had been much struck with the style of her last letter; without being able to fix on any particular expression, there was something in its tone that made him uneasy; but he thought it better to take no notice of this in his reply, although he was anxious to meet her again, to know what ground she could have for vexation and annoyance. The same day, therefore, that Ida parted from Algitha with many tears, the latter was to return to her own house, where Ernest promised to join her at dinner.

The few days he had passed in London were very melancholy; he knew but few persons there. Lord Graham he was slightly acquainted with; but he was so occupied, that Ernest saw very little of him. London to a man who is in low spirits, and has a very small circle of friends, is more depressing than the deepest solitude. There is a perpetual contest going on between the heart and the constant wear and tear and racket of the world, as it rolls and rumbles round him. It was then that Ernest began to regret that his anxiety for the future had induced him to throw away the happiness of the present; if he had restrained his feelings at Melwood, that delightful intercourse with Ida might have continued, and each have remained unpledged and unfettered. He imagined it probable that Mr. Leslie would not then have thought it necessary to have taken Ida to London, for something told him that her father's anxiety originated in a lurking desire to see her affections transferred to some one else, not that she should see the world; and when Ernest looked on those who moved about so infinitely (to his apprehension) superior to himself in those attributes which win a woman's heart, he could not avoid a slight feeling of mistrust. He remembered that Ida was very young; that she knew nothing of the world—that is to say, she knew nothing of the motives, ignoble and unworthy, which so frequently influence men in their intercourse with women. He had himself mixed little in general society; but although he had no practical experience of life, yet he had read and studied much; and he knew that all society is ever repeating itself, that the actors in real life, like the actors on the stage, start from one common principle, and have one common behaviour. Where is the play in which, in one shape or another, we do not find the same

characters—the father and the daughter, Harlequin, the fortunate lover, Polichinello, the foolish indifferent husband, Paillasse, the credulous lover and friend? These are characters common to all nations, to all ages, to all climes. He could understand that the great society of all cities and of all ages contains similar temptations to forgetfulness and estrangement. Ernest, therefore, imagined Ida in London courted by that society, which, however people may pretend to despise it, is in general itself worthy to be courted; containing as it does within its pale much that is noble in conduct, as well as dignified in position. How, then, could he fight against such odds, or venture to hope that he should be remembered in the midst of the whirl, the bustle, the excitement of a London life? He now for the first time began to learn the truth that to youth there is always disappointment; that the pulsations of the heart are so rarely equal; they are ever too rapid or too slow. No man can sufficiently study his heart until it is scarcely worth studying.

When Ernest left London for Wimbourne, he started without the least sense of enjoyment; his mind was too regularly trained to feel that wild extravagant excitement which some men are so keenly susceptible of, if they are for any length of time separated from those they love. A great deal of such interest merely arises from habits of life, which cannot easily be broken through; and this habit and interest is often mistaken for affection. But still as Ernest was really and deeply in love with Ida, it pained him to return to the spot where he had left her, and to find his favourite haunts no longer blest with her presence; and his heart sank within him, when from an eminence he beheld again the grey Norman castle, and perceived that the ensign no longer waved from the keep. As Ernest descended the hill, which was some four or five miles from the castle, he remarked that all the windows were closed; it was the first little incident which gave him a strong sense of loneliness, and that proved to him that the castle, so recently occupied, was now again deserted.

Let us not smile; we who have run through life's interests; we who have lived every day of our lives, and have no longer within us either the inclination or the faculty of love; let us not smile at these poor children of imagination, who still possess all those gifts which we were once so proud of, and which we are now too dignified to admit that we envy. It is a hapless state, in which we know all

things, have the memory of all things, and possess nothing; it is like an outcast gazing on a palace where he may not enter, the priest kneeling at the threshold of a temple where he may not worship. Unhappy indeed, but thrice unhappy is that man who retains the feelings of his youth when long years have swept over him, who ventures again to enter the magic circle, tries to believe himself not unworthy to penetrate into it, and feels that he can love in his middle age as he did in the days of his boyhood. He knows that bright fancy, and vague, indefinite, but oh, how glorious, inclination, have passed from him for ever, "that it is time his heart should be unmoved," and yet he cannot leave the scene of his former triumphs, or sheath a sword, once so bright, but now so rusty; he sees the young growing up around him, he marks their excitement, their privilege of self-sacrifice, and he moves with them, but he knows he is not one of them; that they discard him, that they do not sympathise with him; he has outlived their age, and yet he cannot leave them.

Shall we smile at Ernest because he was at that age when the sense of the deep and of the mysterious are impressed on the heart? No, rather let us love him for that excellence and single-heartedness which only too soon abandon a man. He was impressionable in the clearest acceptation of the word; but what does that mean, but that he had the keenest sense of the beautiful, of all that can dignify or ennoble our common nature? Such a man may not be understood; that is not surprising. But he possesses at least this advantage over many men,—that he is indifferent, honestly indifferent to their opinions. People who live in a circle are so accustomed to regulate all the rules, habits, and fashions of their lives by one common standard, that they cannot comprehend any man whose conduct is influenced by his imagination.

He approached his home with a heavy heart—and Algitha came forward to meet him, but all the elasticity of former days was wanting; her voice evinced her anxiety, her ever-changing colour betrayed her nervous apprehension. Ernest did not at first remark all these indications, and yet he felt there was a change somewhere.

Yes, there was a change. Ernest could not explain it to himself; he was unable to analyze his own feelings. He was certain that there existed some cause of estrangement between himself and Algitha, and yet, if he had been

asked to give his reasons for that conviction, he would have found it difficult to have done so; in vain during the dinner he endeavoured to talk lightly on different matters, and described to her that monastery in which she also took so deep an interest; he could not quite shake off the painful harassing feeling which oppressed him, and the existence of which he did not desire to express to her; but to prove, however, the inherent selfishness of the best of men, whereas the first thing Ida had noticed was the change which had taken place in Algitha's appearance, Ernest did not discern how pale and thin his sister's cheek had become, how broken was her voice, and how painfully subdued her manner. Suddenly, however, while they were at dinner, her strange, languid, melancholy expression caught his attention, and he exclaimed somewhat abruptly, "You are very ill, Algitha; for God's sake tell me what is the matter?"

He had no cause after that observation to accuse her of paleness, for she became scarlet.

"There is nothing the matter, Ernest," she replied, in vain endeavours to conceal her beautiful confusion; "there is nothing the matter; but your question was so sudden, so startling. I am very sorry to lose Ida, that is all. By the by, you have asked me very few questions about Ida."

No, he had rather avoided the subject; for he had a vague feeling that the melancholy which he felt, the consequence of a certain restraint in Algitha's manner, was caused by something relating to Ida and her affections. Algitha had not alluded to the knowledge of his having proposed to her; for she had not heart to congratulate him as he would desire; in fact, she had not spirit to sustain any conversation; but when Ernest, in reply to her remark, poured out question after question, for the mention of Ida's name had reassured him, now it was that Algitha could no longer carry on the deceit, and was forced to tell him that Ida had confided to her the secret of her engagement. His face lit up with joy as he heard this, for it was another pledge of her truth and confidence.

It immediately occurred to him, that Algitha had never written him her congratulations.

"How was it, my Algitha?"

She hesitated, and whispered rather than spoke it. "I thought you would like to announce it to me yourself, and you see I bore your silence patiently for some time; but as for congratulating you, you must know, Er-

nest, how fondly I love you, and what a happiness it will be for me to see you married to Ida." She said this with warmth and affection, and for the moment she forgot her own grief in his happiness.

He kissed his sister fondly, and from that moment the coldness which had existed between them was broken down. She had at last a theme with which to occupy all his attention.

He did talk of Ida, and that far into the night, of his plans, of his hopes, of his fears. The more he talked, the more it seemed that the subject grew upon him. Algitha had merely to sit by and listen, or at moments slightly to assent; it was all he required; he cross-examined her about the object which Mr. Leslie had in going to London; he asked innumerable questions about Lord Elversfoot. Algitha had to confess that she had never been introduced to him, and in this way Ernest learned that she had been ill, for she had not informed him of this in her letters.

"Will you forgive me, dearest Algitha," said he, "for thinking that you were cold, almost unkind, when your apparent indifference was only caused by the weakness resulting from illness? But you should have told me this, my darling, for now I do see how thin you have become; you are no longer the round blooming Algitha. It must be the Beaumaris dissipation; these good Maxwells shall not be entrusted with the care of my little sister again, if they send her back harassed and pale."

Algitha made her brother's affection an excuse for hiding her head against his bosom, while she pressed his hand with emotion. When Ernest went to his room that night he felt far happier than he had for some days, for next to being in the society of one we love, is the pleasure of speaking of her to another; and Ida had promised to correspond regularly with Algitha. So indirectly he would still be in communication with her, and able, without violating his engagement to Mr. Leslie, to express that affection which rendered her so dear to him. And now that he was living in the same spots where he had first disclosed his passion, and where every scene recalled thoughts unexpressed indeed, but still thoughts of wondrous beauty and love, all the love he had previously felt returned with redoubled force. There is so much in association, that even when memories have been long lost, at the least word they recur again to the heart in all their

freshness and fulness. As for Algitha, her mind was more at rest; it is true that she had nothing but regret for the past, and, alas! no hope for the future; but Ernest suspected nothing; his fears were at all events allayed; he soon became accustomed to her paleness; he at first proposed taking her to London to seek for medical advice; but on her assurance that she did feel perfectly well, he desisted. We are so ready to believe what we desire, and men seldom retain their apprehensions respecting another's health.

They rode out together as before. Algitha heard constantly from Ida, whose letters were full of expressions of regret at leaving Castle Melwood, and of her distaste for the new and strange society into which she was thrown; she alluded to some balls and parties, but without any of that enjoyment and excitement which in general attends the *début* of young ladies; but that which did strike Ernest with surprise, was her speaking so much of new political changes and combinations. Her father was fairly in the field for Marylebone, and, as the election drew near, she did not escape the contagion of political interest. Ernest was piqued, for he did not wish her to have one idea apart from him; and he was right. Love is the most exclusive of passions, and will not admit of any compromise.

Circle within circle, each perfect in itself, crossing one another without mingling, as we see the face of a lake when the wild fowl stay in their rapid flight to dip into its bosom. Ernest cared nothing for these politics, and yet there was a great political movement in progress—the Conservative party was growing up, soon to come into power. If the active politician of the Carlton Club had been told at this moment, that there were persons to be found so wrapped up in their own interests, that they were indifferent who was in or out of office, that there were spots so retired that the people were almost ignorant of the name of the premier, he would scarcely have believed it possible; yet such is the case; each person has his own pursuits, in which he is apt to think all other people interested. Each man in love imagines that every stranger reads his secret; each politician thinks his own measure is the important one; every trade, guild, and corporation regards its own prosperity as essential to the well-being of the country. No man, either in his individual or in his corporate capacity, ever can get rid of himself, or of the over-

weening importance which he attaches to his pursuits.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Yes! we have grown together,
When the sun rose o'er the vale;
Or when the day set dusk and pale,
We grew together.

We have long grown together,
It was a glorious light
Fell on my heart's dark night,
When we first grew together.

We have long grown together,
Water'd by sweetest springs,
Of love and holy things,
We grew together.

Oh, shall we grow together
In those dark future years,
When smiles are changed to tears,
Then shall we grow together?

Yes, we shall grow together,
Or, should we cease to grow,
The same blow shall lay us low,
Falling together.

So wrote Ernest, in the fulness of his faith, and his confidence in the future, in the retirement of the country, his heart subdued by the warm summer evening, when the soul is full of poetry, and when even those who have no object to love respect those who have.

It was that same evening that Ida, after riding in the Park, went for the first time to the opera. How little did Ernest imagine, that while he was sitting with his head buried in his hands, endeavouring to realize her presence, to recall every sweet feature of her countenance, that Ida was the centre of a circle of admirers; that when she entered the box, every glass was directed towards her; that Mr. Leslie was enchanted at the number of persons of high rank and character that crowded round to do her homage; that in fact, what with the novelty, the excitement, the dazzling nature of the scene, and the wondrous power of Grisi, Wimbourne, Ernest, were at the moment alike forgotten.

The morning after that evening, when the post arrived, it brought Algitha a letter from Ida, and Ernest one from Beaumaris. In his anxiety to hear about Ida, Ernest laid his own letter on the table, without looking at the post-mark; but it did not escape Algitha. She saw that it was written in Lady Mary's handwriting, and she feared what its contents might be.

"Algitha, you are not well," said Ernest. "You are as pale as the table-cloth. And you have not opened Ida's letter—give it me;" for she had clutched it convulsively in her hand.

"No, I am not very well at this moment, Ernest," she replied, trembling with emotion. "I am anxious about Ida, for she was not very well, you remember, when she last wrote to me. You may read her letter first, and give me that from Beaumaris;" and she took up Lady Mary's letter.

But her anxiety on so trifling a subject was too apparent. Ernest could not fail to perceive it, and he took the letter from her again.

There was something in her manner which displeased him, and roused his suspicions. He determined to read that letter alone. From the first moment he had remarked that Algitha carefully shunned the subject of Beaumaris, and that he had not heard from Mr. or Lady Mary Maxwell. He was not at all of a suspicious character, but Algitha's reserve, so unusual to her, the state of melancholy into which she so frequently fell when it could not in any way be accounted for by her regret at Ida's departure, pained and distressed him. He had not any defined notion of evil when he left the room with the letter in his pocket, but he was in a restless uneasy state.

He went to his room, and as he perused the letter a sickly feeling fell upon him—his brain reeled—his sight was troubled. It dropped from his trembling hand, and he fell back in his chair, for that letter too plainly announced to him that his sister's character was blasted for ever.

Lady Mary wrote in that stilted heavy-morality style which virtuous and very middle-aged ladies affect; full of wholesome truths, blurting out the most painful facts in the plainest and most ungarnished manner. She explained to Ernest that her affection "for her dear-beloved innocent child Mary (the dear child whose life had been one long military flirtation) compelled her, in self-justification, to inform Ernest of the reports which were current respecting Algitha; that she had long contained her feelings, but recently circumstances had come to her knowledge which she no longer felt justified in concealing. She was much grieved to give Ernest pain, but still more deeply was she distressed at the disgrace which his sister's conduct would bring upon her family. Mr. Maxwell was quite ill from excitement and annoyance; indeed she could not pretend to say when he would quite recover the shock which he had received. From the moment Algitha arrived at Beaumaris, she commenced a desperate flirtation with a young officer,

who had recently joined the regiment quartered there (she refrained from mentioning his name, for that might lead to a duel, and she abhorred duelling). This young officer had been very fond of Mary until this bad girl arrived, and by her insidious arts robbed her of his affections. Algitha and this young man were in the habit of walking home from church together; and they had been seen frequently alone, and evidently anxious to escape observation.

"All this," continued Lady Mary, "I had known some time; and I showed my niece, by my manner, how greatly I was annoyed at her conduct. As for poor Mary, she begged she might be as little as possible with her cousin for fear of having her morals corrupted. But it was not until two or three days since, when Mr. Maxwell went to Bangor, that he was told that your sister privately met this young man at night at the old ruin, and remained there with him sometimes for two or three hours. Of course I felt it my duty to examine all the servants immediately, and then I learnt from my darling Mary's maid, that she one night saw my niece dress at eleven o'clock, and leave the house after our prayers; that she followed her to the old tower, which you know, my dear nephew, is entered from our garden by a small wicket, and there she saw Algitha meet this officer. They remained together for more than an hour, when they thought they were observed, and Algitha immediately made her escape into the house. Lucy, that is the name of the girl, told your sister what she had seen, who gave her all the money she possessed to purchase her secrecy; but the poor girl is now so overcome by her conscience, that she could not refrain from telling me everything when I put a few questions to her. Now, is not this horrible, my dear nephew?—when I think what my dear old brother and sister-in-law would say if they were alive—I am quite horrified—in my house too—under the same roof with my innocent sweet-minded child. I don't know what you may do, but I am sure you ought to turn her out of the house; put her in a convent or a penitentiary—anywhere—rather than that she should go about at large corrupting every one. I have only to say, in conclusion, that Mr. Maxwell will never allow her inside his house again; and if he does not write to the Earl and all his family, it is on account of his affection for his poor sister, and not from any consideration for Algitha."

Well might Ernest be shocked and bewildered at the receipt of such a letter. He started as though a frozen hand had touched his heart.

There was no mistake in its terms; it left no room for doubt;—unless Algitha were distinctly able to deny the fact of having left the house on the night in question—she must be assumed to be guilty. She—his sister—the child of his mother—but a short time since so guileless, joyous, and happy—yes, she had changed. No longer the light and life of her home—no longer the happy careless being he had known, but broken-hearted, silent, and conscious. Yes—there must be some truth in the terrible facts which were revealed to him, for they explained much that had hitherto baffled all his calculations. It was a fearful thing to condemn her mentally and in anticipation; but he could not conceal from himself that every circumstance and incident added to the weight of testimony against her—Algitha the victim of a sensualist—the abandoned and betrayed—the outcast of society. No—not that. Even if she had sinned, she should have redress. If she had been betrayed, the man who had betrayed her should do her justice. No position, no rank, should shield the offender, or save him from a certain punishment in the event of his refusing to fulfil his promise—for promises there must have been, or Algitha never could have wandered from the path of virtue.

He turned from the terrace where he had been walking, to look for his sister; and yet his heart sank within him. How could he ever convey to her the purport of that cruel letter? why was it written?—why inform the ignorant, or destroy illusions? What is it makes the happiness of the many? Is it not ignorance?—Does not knowledge, in almost all cases, open the heart to suffering? What men call experience is wretchedness. If you could teach a man how to forget, you would teach him the happiest of lessons. What punishment is severe enough for those meddling dotards of society, who go about pointing out every defect; prefacing every vain, heartless, and frivolous disclosure by an assurance that they tell you this or that as a matter of duty? They must speak their minds, these estimable people; it is not from the love of gossip, nor from the vain desire to appear to know more than the world in general. Oh no! but these persons have a strong sense of moral obligation, which induces them to discharge the duties of inquisitors in

society, and to tell the most distressing facts in the most painful and direct manner.

Ernest thought of Lady Mary with a bitterness and hatred hostile to his character. He was not satisfied with his own conduct in having allowed his sister to visit the Maxwells without him. He could not conceal from himself, and he did not endeavour to do so, that but for Ida's presence at Melwood he should probably have accompanied Algitha to Beaumaris, that he was too happy of an excuse for remaining behind, that, in fact, his own selfishness had been the real cause of the evil; for had he been there, he would have watched over and protected her. He had entrusted this young girl alone in a family with the members of which he had, after all, but little acquaintance. He knew Algitha's vain and spoiled character; he had feared much evil from the visit, and yet, foreseeing it as strongly as he did, he had made no effort to save her; no sacrifice of himself—that sacrifice which he was ever preaching to others.

But it might not be true.

For a moment his heart bounded within him; but as he turned round he saw his sister with her head buried in the pillow of a sofa, near the drawing-room window. As he approached, he thought he could distinguish her sobs. Yes; she felt instinctively that that letter had disclosed all. The excitement of the moment, the pent-up anxiety of the past fortnight now overcame her courage; she was weeping hysterically.

“Algitha,” said Ernest, approaching her, and putting his arm fondly round her waist; “Algitha, lift up your head, my sister, for indeed I love you.”

“Oh, no! no more,” murmured the poor girl.

“Yes, Algitha, from my soul I love you as much as ever. Yes, this letter has told me a harrowing story. Would to God you had confided in me! I had hoped for a moment that the statement I hold in my hand was an exaggeration—the work of an idle mischievous woman, but your tears prove to me that it must have some foundation. I will not ask you, Algitha, any questions, but I pray you for my satisfaction as a brother, in order that, in my duty towards you, I may know what course to take, let me read this letter to you; if any thing is exaggerated you will deny it; if it is true, you will remain silent.”

And he read that letter, his voice choaking with tears of indignation; and she did keep silent.

"My God!" he exclaimed, pressing his hand to his brow.

She did not raise her head; but she put out her hand and seized his arm. She dreaded some act of violence. She did not dare allow him to leave the room. She feared his absence and his silence more than his presence and his language.

"Forgive me!" she murmured. "I am utterly miserable."

"And the name of this man?" said he solemnly and slowly, as if he too almost trembled to hear it pronounced.

"Oh, Ernest," she exclaimed, in a voice of agony, rising from the sofa and falling on her knees before him, "do not ask me to tell you his name, and do not even too much wrong him in your heart; he will return and marry me, believe me he will. We had a quarrel—he was compelled to leave Beaumaris; he has promised to return and marry me."

"And if within a certain time he does not fulfil his engagement, will you solemnly pledge yourself, in justice to our family name, in justice to the memory of our mother; if he should not return, will you promise me that then there shall be no longer any concealment?"

"Spare me now, Ernest," she murmured, "and I will promise you everything."

"I am satisfied," he answered. Yes, he believed that he was so; not being acquainted with the man, with his cold, selfish, material character, he readily, nay, anxiously, entertained the belief that he would come back to fulfil his engagement; he could imagine nothing else. So ignorant was he of the habits of some men, that he started with horror at the notion that any man could really compromise a young and innocent girl and then leave her to despair. With his love for his sister, he could not entertain the possibility of so sudden a change in her character as these events pre-supposed. The first shock of the letter passed, his thoughts followed his wishes; he felt assured that Algitha was still pure as ever; that this officer, whoever he might be, would act as a man of honour; that Lady Mary was one of those meddling old fools who delight in bringing mischief into families; like those evil-disposed hags who we are told in fairy tales take their places round the cradle of the child, blasting all good things with their foul aspect. He wrote to tell her how rashly and wrongly she had judged Algitha—he assured her it

was not his intention to send the orphan girl to convent or penitentiary—that he should press her only the more tightly to his heart because she was in sorrow—and love her the more deeply because, for the moment, another had deserted her.

The love and the friendship of such a man as Ernest is the sole love and friendship worth possessing; it is that which overleaps all the opinions, harsh judgments, and prejudices of society; which clings to the loved object, or the long-attached friend, through all trials, through all humiliations, through all error, like the creepers and wild flowers that cluster round broken ruins, and whose ever-growing tendrils can beautify decay.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE carriages were setting down rapidly at Lady Alverstone's; it was the last night of her weekly receptions; name after name was announced by the stentorian voices of the servants stationed at intervals on the staircase; "Coming down,"—"Tell it to drive on,"—"Don't keep stopping up the way there,"—and sundry other observations mingled with sweet voices, and the buzz of general conversation; silken vanities, jewelled pride, swept gorgeously and meteor-like up the staircase; there were fair young heads, with swan-like bending necks, and each face wore the smile of self-love which seeks for homage; there was no music save the murmur of those low soft voices; it sounded like the gentle ripple of the summer sea, or the breeze when it whispers and languishes in orange groves; to the man of imagination it was a poem containing passages of marvellous beauty, such beauty as the Anglo-Saxon race can alone produce; to the man of bow-window fashion, it was a scene on which, peacock-like, he could spread his plumage and aspire to conquest; to the politician, it was the centre of political intrigue, where grave matters were for the moment treated lightly, and the antagonists on the floor of the House might be seen holding most amicable converse together; to the man of serious and constant occupation, it was a necessity to be present, it gave him influence and ton to be seen in such a society; but beyond this he voted it a bore, and was too glad to take the first opportunity of slipping away to return to his laborious work; every one in those rooms viewed the party in a different aspect, and retired from it differently affected.

And thus it is with everything that passes

under our observation ; look abroad at nature, when it glows beneath the rays of the sun, as he pours down his streams of golden lava in his burning course ; or on the evening, with its violet and purple streaks ; or on the morning, when it is enthroned on banks of burnished clouds ; at nature, in its wildest, most savage, Siberian garb ; or when in wide abundant plains, like a sea of silver, it ripples in the moonbeam. What two men form precisely the same judgment on any scene ? Or what man at two different periods of his life regards it with the same ideas ? No, the elements themselves are not more uncertain than are the emotions they call forth, and this is the great charm and mystery of love, that it is love alone that can awaken that description of sympathy that drinks in the same inspiration from the same scene.

There were three at that evening party whom we must particularly mention ; each of the three arrayed in that soft silk, in the folds of which love delights to lurk ; each remarkable for some grace in manner or feature ; each with her especial devotees and admirers ; for not the Pantheon itself possessed, even in the time of Augustus, more deities than the temple of fashion ; or humbler schools of votaries, and too many willing to transfer their faith with more than Pagan obsequiousness to any new shrine ; each has its hierarchy, its altar, alas ! its scoffer ; the simile is not unmeet, for persecution never more bitterly arrayed set against sect, than it does coterie against coterie. Envy and malice were never more serpent-tongued in the cause of religion than in the cause of fashion ; only the world is the least forgiving, for it never scruples to take up the first stone and hurl it, albeit seldom with pure and guiltless hands.

The simile is not unmeet, for one of the three in that room was soft, pure, and holy, as the faith which she professed ; her feet beautiful as the feet of those who speak the language of truth, and the smile eloquent in its sweetness as the whisper of pardon ; she was one of those few who cross our path occasionally as a type of what women can be, and only rarely—that men may not be too arrogant of the race from which they spring, and believe that they too are fashioned like gods ; hers was a countenance so infantine in its simplicity, so pure and delicate, that the abandoned as they gaze upon it dare not indulge in unholy thoughts ; and which even in their visions, if they recall it in their

dreams, is associated with innocence and devotion. Why are such visions ever bestowed upon us, if not as an evidence of the truth of revelation, that there is a world beyond of beautiful creations ? why is this love of the admirable implanted in our hearts, if not to prepare our hearts for wonders of beauty which now surpass our comprehension ? She whom we have been describing was Ida ; it would be but a faint description of the interest she excited, to say that she won universal admiration ; there was something in that eye *bleu de reine*, which cheered the heart as you gazed at it ; her courtesy was gentle, yet gay ; the attitude was unconscious of its singular grace and merit ; such a mind as Ida's at once adapted itself to the new society in which she was thrown, for she possessed the chief secret of society—gentle manner and gentleness of spirit ; the blush on her cheek was the light of youth, not the glow of vanity ; men unconsciously (men to whom she was unknown) bowed as she passed ; the hard-featured politicians rose to do her honour ; the awkward and nervous stumbled to give her place, and proffered their clumsy homage ;—altogether, she stood there unrivalled, the sovereign of beauty.

The second centre of a circle was Mrs. Chestford, who was at Florence when we parted from Mrs. Saville some twelve years previously, and to whom Sir Henry Lovell had transferred his attentions. Mrs. Saville was described at that time as one of those who are proud of the reputation of *mauvaise conduite*, as one of the boasters of vices which they dare not commit ; but who do not for some time overstep their rubicon, because they calculate that when they have once yielded themselves to a man, he will soon cease to care about them ; for this reason—for this alone—they remain “ virtuous ;” yes, virtuous ! positively that is the term ! nay, more, as virtuous women, they arrogate to themselves the right to calumniate, to traduce ; “ some truths they tell, but dashed and brewed with lies ;” they eagerly seize the first opportunity of blasting a fairer and younger character, because they themselves “ never wronged their husbands.”

But the day does come, sooner or later, when the edifice of their vanity crumbles in pieces, when they too fall ; they invariably meet their fate at the hands of some man more deeply read in human nature than themselves ; such was Mrs. Chestford, of the same school as Mrs. Saville, and far worse ;

but she found her match in Sir Henry Lovell, as he had conquered many more stubborn wills than hers. After dangle about her for some time, to use his own phrase, he was determined not to stand any more nonsense. Some time after she told him that he had crushed her first affections, that she had sacrificed herself for him, and repeated numberless other suitable phrases,—he only answered with a cold sneer; told her that he hated hysterics and *exigence*; that, on the contrary, she had made advances to him in the first instance; and that for the future he should not see so much of her, or send her any more bouquets; both of which promises he religiously kept, for the constant visits had at moments bored him excessively, and the bouquets had from time to time been very expensive. In fact, the whole scene had been worked up by Sir Henry cleverly enough; he knew that it is always easiest to escape from a connection in the bustle and excitement of a scene, that well-prepared and well-expressed indignation is an admirable weapon when properly managed; so when the storm was at its height he took his departure, and never for the future returned, except when it suited his convenience; this was what he called putting matters on a comfortable and intelligible footing; this *liaison* dragged on for some time, and then it wore itself out, died a natural death, like spring flowers, and he was rather glad of this than otherwise.

The twelve years had told terribly on Mrs. Chestford; all the Rowlands' cosmetics had failed to make her look twelve years younger, and yet she wrestled gallantly with age. A woman

Struggling with the storms of fate,
But greatly falling,

she managed so well to conceal the devastation of raking and time, that it was not impossible, it was not positively insulting to tell her that she looked thirty, although she could not be less than forty. The flattery was obvious enough, but still it was not absolutely too gross for utterance. When she went out, she fought like a general for the best light. She was perfectly well dressed; so far her foreign education had very much improved her. Her dresses were the very best that Victorine could make; her bonnets, her gloves, her shoes, were all perfect; perhaps, on the whole, she was rather too infantine about the head-dress; the wreath would better have become a young girl of twenty,

in whom the roses would not have drawn forth such unfavourable comparisons. She had always kept in the world of fashion; for fashion, so obdurate and harsh to some, is so kind and indulgent to others. Sir Henry had managed this for her; on her return to England he got her into society by introducing her to some half dozen ladies and leaders of fashion; and once in it, she had tact enough to keep her place there.

Hers might not unjustly be termed a vagabond existence, taking the legal definition of the term vagabond, "a person who has not any ostensible means of gaining his or her livelihood." This was precisely her case, and people wondered, and may perhaps wonder still, how she managed to dress so well, to have such a well-turned-out carriage, to wear such an abundance of jewels; and then occasionally the carriage was put down, and the jewels were sold, and the toilette looked old. She fluctuated a good deal; the English climate was not more variable. Her husband, a good, wholesome, easy kind of person, of course was not at all aware what was going on; he had through some court influence obtained a very small and unimportant place in a public office, which kept him from home all day, and when he returned in the evening he would sometimes find Lord Callfield, who was at the head of his board, on the point of leaving the room; he thought this very kind and attentive of his Lordship, who, to do him justice, had the reputation of being very kind and attentive indeed to all ladies. Mrs. Chestford had, as we have said, a circle of her own; for she had learned in perfection that principal art of women, to flatter men well. Youth never condescends to this; and this is the reason why, nine times out of ten—the woman of forty will distance in popularity the girl of twenty. Men in general explain it by the remark, "she has more to say for herself." More justly it should be expressed, "she has more to say about us."

So Mrs. Chestford was being slowly driven by the cruel hand of time from the Eden of her youth. The flaming sword of destiny was waving behind her, and compelling her progress. Ever and anon she would endeavour to stop and lament the sweet spots she was leaving, and sometimes strive to recall the calm beauty of her earliest childhood; before her was an unknown land, on which darkness rested, peopled with hatreds, contempts, and black imaginings; and ever, as she advanced,

steeper and steeper grew the descent, and more rapid the pace. One by one the wreaths she had worn had been thrown aside, until a mass of dead leaves and withered flowers were a silent testimony to the decay which had fallen upon her. Oh! these dead flowers, which after a ball are thrown away, what a record they are of the hour of triumph which has been, but can never be again! Young brides wear them not, for they are omens of evil, which are dying as you dance—wear artificial flowers, happier emblems of the life you are leading. And oh, above all, give not a flower or even a leaf to your lover, lest when he wake in the morning he find it dead beside him.

And Lady Symington was there, the centre of the third circle, and over her the twelve years had passed as though they had been constant summers. Hers was the secret of perpetual youth—perpetual heart; where the countenance is not ruffled by any of those passions which tear some delicate frames to pieces, by any of those envyings which make life to many one prolonged regret. If some few, like Lady Symington, had remained unchanged after the lapse of two lustra, it was painful, on the other hand, to reflect how many had become, as it were, different beings in that space of time, how many great illustrations and great names had passed away, and left, alas! for the inherent selfishness of human nature, scarcely a blank behind them.

And there were others there, graceful, young, and gentle, each with her separate world of hopes, of excitements and passions, all so different in their homes and in their hearts, yet all wearing the same smile.

Oh wondrous influence of the world, and of that world most especially which is dignified by the name of society, that it can discipline the countenance, arrest the attention, and for the moment efface the wild workings of human passion; think as you gaze what various hearts beat beneath those silken bodices, what various intelligences gleam beneath the drooping eyelids. Ay, do what you will to fashion nature to the world, dress it in silks of newest dye, adorn it with jewels, deck it with coronets, still, still the heart is there, and it responds to the same master-touch as the heart of the savage in the prairies of the far west. And beware, for this heart will sometimes assert its sway, and break from your control; so never forget that every frame has its own peculiar store of feelings and emotions, but cherish them and love them.

There are moments when rule, family discipline, all fail to govern, and the mind leaves its natural home in search of the indefinite.

Type of many others; let us on this occasion watch in silence one soft spirit glowing with youth. She stands there so graceful and beautiful, numbering but eighteen springs, with that sweetly expressive countenance, that head so small and classical, that smile so gently mocking; perhaps on this night in the crowded door-way some one may have heard her voice for the first time, and at the sound of its music have loved her, and that love may have been responded to; blame her if you like for yielding to her feelings, but it is a noble and a glorious moment when the lips first pronounce the words "I love thee," and two hearts, separated by the unwritten code of fashion, burst their shackles, and rush into a new life together. Blame her, if you will, but to both there has been a moment of inspiration which frozen hearts will never possess, and never can appreciate. Oh, thou who art happy beyond all others, although made happy by a glance, press not through the crowd to join her, for she knows you are there; speak not to her before the public, for her voice cannot tell you more, and would fain tell you less, than the smile with which she greets your presence. Still your heart, lest it beat too loud; indulge while you may, for, alas, how fleeting is such indulgence, in the sweet thought, that there is one in the dense crowd who cares for you—thinks of you when she is alone, and comes here only to meet you; and even if you interchange no word with her, return home and be blest; and, above all, remember, cull not the flower that perfumes the atmosphere; for as it grows it is beautiful; let it blossom in security; for you cannot replace the bud when it is picked, or restore the leaves when your hand has rudely scattered them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I AM sure that my aunt does not wish to go yet, Miss Leslie, and that you have time to take some tea, for she really does not mind remaining late; she has just commenced a political conversation with Mr. Selby."

It was Luttrell who said this to Ida; thus fate works out their destiny.

"Oh, certainly, my dear," said Lady Sandbeck to Ida, "I don't care how long I stay on these occasions; you will find me here when you have had your tea."

Lady Sandbeck had been one of the hand-

somest women of her day ; there was something very commanding in her appearance ; her husband had owed a great deal of his prosperity in life to her energy of character ; her singularly quick intelligence, her very admirable tact, her influence over society were surprising ; some abused, some calumniated her, but all paid her homage ; there was something certainly in the force of her "*sic volo sic jubeo*," for people are generally disposed to estimate others by the price which they set upon themselves ; this may explain away a portion of her success ; but we may rest assured of one thing, that no person, man or woman, obtains and preserves a great influence over a large society like that of London, comprising as it does all that is powerful in illustration and intellect, without corresponding qualities.

Lady Sandbeck was delighted at the notion of a marriage between her nephew and Miss Leslie. She really was far too high-minded, far too scrupulous, to have aided any marriage, even for him, which she imagined would bring misery on a young and innocent girl ; but she took a woman's view of the advantages of the connexion, which for Ida were undeniably very great ; and then withal she doated on Alfred as if he were her son, notwithstanding all the difficulties in which Alfred had involved his father, the results of which had even been felt by her and the whole family ; she never would concede that he was in the wrong ; most glorious of instincts that of a woman's love, which not only watches over man through the long nights of childhood, but through the long watches of middle life, when all around is drear and dark ; which is so slow to believe evil or guile ; and even at last, when reason can no longer repulse credence to the force of external evidence, boldly throws the mantle of her affection over the guilty one, and proclaims the great truth, that whether in the midnight of evil, or in the day-spring of virtue, equally he is beloved.

Since we parted from Luttrell, as we shall continue to call him, (notwithstanding his new title of Lord Linton,) his career had been a very rapid and eventful one. Lord Elversfoot found it essential for his party interest that his son should be returned for his county, and, for his own interest, that he should have the opportunity of making love to Miss Leslie. With these two objects in view, he obtained him six months' leave of absence. So here was Luttrell thrown back again into his old

haunts, leading precisely the same description of life as he did before, with the exception that he never failed each day in escorting Ida about, for which he had every opportunity afforded him, as she passed the greater part of her time in Piccadilly, where Lady Sandbeck lived, his Lordship having taken very great care to hire a house for Mr. Leslie in her immediate vicinity, in Grosvenor Place.

As for Marie, Luttrell had called at the house where she lodged, and learned there that she had quitted it about a month before, and without leaving any address. When he saw the wretched description of lodging where she had been residing he felt very deeply shocked ; but the impression, like all those which now crossed his mind, was very evanescent.

It is not uninteresting to know how Ida liked her new mode of life, and we are constrained to admit that, after the first shyness had worn itself off, there was something in the excitement, the constant whirl of amusement, the variety of incident, of a London life, which pleased her. She had not forgotten Ernest ; quite the contrary, she was always regretting that he, too, was not in town to join in these gaieties ; but a girl must be of a very cold unimaginative temper who is not at first imposed upon by the glitter, the brightness, the refinement of London. And then she really liked Lady Sandbeck, who, whether out of respect to his Lordship's wishes, or from her own innate kindness, made every sacrifice to please her. Mr. Leslie was delighted at the reception his daughter met with, and proud of being himself admitted into the first houses, and treated with the greatest consideration ; it was not without a secret satisfaction he observed Luttrell's assiduous attention ; he fondly cherished the hope that a few weeks of London would effectually drive Ernest out of Ida's memory, and then he quite made up his mind that, in the event of Luttrell's proposing to her, he would not see any necessity for a year's delay ; so on the occasion of this evening, as on every preceding one, Ida went to tea with Luttrell.

His vanity led him to believe that he was succeeding in awakening some interest for himself ; but his anxiety was overwhelming when he perceived the affection which Ida entertained for Algitha. He had been informed by Algitha of much of Ida's history, and it may be readily imagined with what care he concealed the fact that he had ever visited Wales or heard of Algitha's name. He

thought he was making progress; but it was like the progress of a man to the crater of a volcano, with the ground crumbling beneath his feet and destruction raging below him.

It may appear strange that Ida did not perceive Luttrell's marked attention to her, and at once check it, but the very circumstance of her heart being occupied with the thought of Ernest obscured her natural quickness of observation; had her affections been disengaged, she could not have failed to notice his assiduity, and it may be as Luttrell's manner was most prepossessing it might not have been disagreeable to her.

Lady Sandbeck, when Ida left with Luttrell, engaged in conversation with Mr. Selby.

Mr. Selby was one of those men who, had he lived in the time of the Fronde, would have belonged to the "parti des Importans," always solemn and mysterious, expressing no opinion except through the medium of shrugs and sighs; he was associated with some three or four others, who were always talking of the state of the nation, and met together occasionally to form some plan of action, without any one of the party having any suggestions to offer, or ideas to communicate. Mr. Selby lost no opportunity of making people believe that he was perfect in the science of state-craft, that he was the centre of every political intrigue, the spiral around which all politics wound. From so constantly asserting his claims to attention he passed in the world as possessing a superior intellect, which was precisely what he had not. He was only capable of occasional sallies of wit, and had a certain habit of society; he pretended to have read a great deal, but complained bitterly of his memory, which is a sure proof that a man is very ignorant, and that he is ashamed of it. To posterity Mr. Selby will be a very little man, but with the present generation he passes as a man of vast resources, and capable of anything if he would only try. The only real evidence he ever gave of cleverness is his taking good care never to try, which is the safest way of preserving this favourable prestige.

"And who is that quick-looking man, Mr. Selby?" asked Lady Sandbeck.

"Oh, a great friend of mine," said the energetic Mr. Selby; "one of the cleverest fellows in London,—Sir Abel Musgrave. He has risen to great eminence at the bar, and they talk of him as Attorney-General if Peel comes in. You really should be acquainted with him; he is the centre of a knot of clever

men, who hold delightful *réunions* at his rooms in the Temple. Why, Lord Elversfoot dines there occasionally. In general Sir Abel arranges his parties on the chemical principle, that bodies with opposite properties mixed together produce the most amicable result. So Low Church, High Church, High Monarchy and Republican, Tory, Whig, Radical, the traveller, the poet, the historian, all meet at his table, and the result is admirable. I will introduce him to you." So saying Mr. Selby started after Sir Abel Musgrave; but he was too late, he had just left the house.

"And what do you think of the state of parties now, Mr. Selby?" asked Lady Sandbeck. "Did I not tell you, some weeks since, that we should do very well; that the country was more with us than you imagined? You will see the result of the elections."

"Why, my dear Lady Sandbeck, there is a great deal of truth in your remark, a great deal; but I had a communication to-day with a most important member of the opposition,—now his opinion, mind I don't say my opinion, is, that the government will lose on the elections."

"And your opinion, Mr. Selby?"

"Precisely that which I have always given; that there is a great deal of sound sense in the people. The elections will prove this. Those persons who trust to the people will not be disappointed. I cannot speak more decidedly as to the result of the elections, without compromising other persons, who have reposed confidence in me. You see, Lady Sandbeck, I am obliged to say very little indeed; I may say, that at this moment I am in a position of difficulty. By-the-by, talking of elections, does that pretty young lady's father stand for Marylebone?"

"Mr. Leslie; yes, I believe it is arranged," answered Lady Sandbeck.

"Ah! very well; I shall see to it," said Mr. Selby, with a very significant nod. "I have a few votes in that neighbourhood, and the *debris* of some little influence."

The fact was, that Mr. Selby had been marvellously influenced by the confidence with which Lady Sandbeck had spoken of the result of the elections, and was preparing himself for any line of policy which circumstances might render necessary. He was one of that class of politicians

Qui change, à tout instant, de l'esprit comme de mode,
Il tourne au moindre vent, il tombe au moindre choc,
Aujourd'hui dans un casque et demain dans un froc.

Ida returned to Lady Sandbeck, her cheeks glowing with animation. It would have done the coldest and most indifferent heart good to have remarked with what pride her father gazed upon her, with what joy he watched all her movements, how gratified he was when, with Ida on his arm, he heard all those low whispers as he passed which even he could not fail to know were occasioned by the loveliness of his child. Here indeed was the realization of all the dreams of his boyhood; a daughter, endowed with all the gifts of influence, fortune, and beauty, before whom the nobles of the land bowed; to whom it was almost an honour to be presented. He had never felt happier than that night. When his thoughts reverted to Liverpool, he could not, with a pardonable vanity, help desiring that the friends of his youth, who had toiled through the same scenes of adversity and depression, could see him now in his greatness. This was from no mean desire of rivalling them, and wounding their feelings; but, mix in general society as we may, it is those who have known us in early life, whose opinions we are at all times anxious to enlist, and on whose appreciation of ourselves we set the greatest value. Mr. Leslie anticipated the moment when he should enter the House of Commons. A few more weeks, and he would be legislating for those who had toiled with him through life. A few more months, and he might, as Lord Elversfoot had said, become—

He was standing in a passage between two rooms, indulging in these delightful reflections, when he heard his own name mentioned.

"She is beautiful—perfectly beautiful!" said a voice he did not recognise.

"Indeed she is," replied Lord Elversfoot; "and more than beautiful—the sweetest creature that ever was. Luttrell would indeed be a lucky fellow if he should win her."

"Well, all the world declares that it is 'un fait accompli,'" continued the other; "that in a very short time Miss Leslie will become Lady Linton; and no one of all our aristocracy will play her part better than this child of the people. You know, my Lord, I once stood for Liverpool—the very place where Mr. Leslie made his fortune. Well, I can assure you that nothing surprised me more than to see the refinement, the delicacy of thought, the elegance of taste, among the ladies there. I am afraid that we are too apt to imagine that these qualities are quite limited to a certain

set in London. Undoubtedly they must prevail more generally here, from the universal habits of life. As Burke says, 'To be bred in a place of estimation—to be taught to respect oneself—to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye—to be forced to the greatest degree of vigilance, foresight, and circumspection, is a state of things in which no fault is committed with impunity,—this is a discipline which a national aristocracy go through, and to which no other class is subject;' but, I repeat, I have seen ladies pre-eminent in every graceful accomplishment, who have not passed through this probation; and pre-eminent among these I place Miss Leslie."

"Yes," said Lord Elversfoot, "but you have been quoting from Burke in his appeal from the new to the old Whigs, and, if I remember rightly, he also enumerates as personal advantages: 'To live among rich traders, who from their success are presumed to have sharp and vigorous understandings, and who in the highest degree possess the qualities of diligence, order, and resolution; and have naturally a cultivated and habitual regard to justice.' Now Mr. Leslie is the finest specimen of such a man. Under his tuition, I am not so greatly surprised that his daughter should be what we find her."

Now that Lord Elversfoot thought that the marriage was almost certain, his respect for trade was increasing rapidly.

Mr. Leslie turned away, his mind overwhelmed by conflicting feelings. He had heard his daughter for the first time called Lady Linton. The sound pleased him; he to be the father of an actual lady and a future marchioness. He had heard in the same breath the pursuits of his life indirectly spoken of in terms of almost contempt, and, on the other hand, defended with enthusiasm; but why did they need defence? Even while he asked himself the question, his heart told him that there was a wide gulph separated the man of the people from the peer of the realm; and this inferiority it rested with himself to remove, and to link his name and blood with that of an illustrious house.

Rested with him?—and Ida; what were Ida's feelings on the matter? Was she not engaged to another? Could he advise her to break such an engagement? Could he advise her to declare that a month had changed the current of her heart? And if she still loved Ernest as before, if the excitement of this new world had not destroyed her nobler qualities,

would he compel her to a marriage for ambition—would he avail himself of her love for him, to make her commit a great injustice towards one man, and a great crime towards another? How could he reconcile all these difficulties? If the proposition should be made to him by Lord Elversfoot he should not know how to reply to it, he was involved in a labyrinth of doubt. His principal feeling at this moment was one of annoyance against Ernest.

A gentle finger touched his arm. "Papa, I am ready to go."

"Are you, my love?" and he took her arm in his; and as its warmth touched his heart, he thought that her happiness was so dear to him, that to promote it he was prepared to sacrifice even his ambition.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LORD ELVERSFOOT was resolved to bring matters at once to the point with Mr. Leslie; it was rather a dangerous crisis, but, on the other hand, the London season was advancing rapidly. The general election, which was immediately anticipated, might change the whole complexion of affairs. He knew that, once out of office, his power of working on Mr. Leslie's vanity would be considerably diminished; besides, he had very little doubt of the successful issue of the event. Even if Ida was attached to that young man in the neighbourhood of Melwood, (whose name he had quite forgotten,) it would, he thought, be very easy to laugh her out of such an affection; he could not imagine that a young girl could continue to be in love with a man, and at the same time enjoy herself in the whirl of society. But with all his knowledge of the world, he was in error on this occasion. In each individual there are, as it were, two existences growing up at the same time, and distinct from each other; there is the life of the world, and the life apart from the world; in some instances these two mingle together, and a person becomes thoroughly worldly; but this was not Ida's case.

It was not an uncommon occurrence for Lord Elversfoot to stroll down to Grosvenor Place, and pass half-an-hour with Mr. Leslie; in the first place, because he thought it politic to keep him in good humour; and, secondly, he got a good deal of very important information from him about the state of trade, etc., which he used afterwards to retail to the House in the evening with very considerable effect. It ought not, therefore, to have been at all a surprising announcement to Mr.

Leslie, who was sitting at breakfast with Ida; that his lordship was waiting to see him in his morning room. And yet, for some reason or another, he was visibly confused, changed colour, and blurted out very indistinct directions to the servant about requesting his lordship to wait a few moments.

"Won't you ask him up here, papa?" said Ida.

"No, no," he answered quickly, still more disconcerted. "I dare say that he wants to speak to me alone—probably something to do with the election, with which ladies are not much interested. You may go," said he, turning to the servant, who was still standing at the door.

Ida looked a little surprised, but made no farther remark.

Mr. Leslie descended the stairs slowly, like a man full of thought; the wood-work creaked with the importance of his footstep. After the conversation which he had overheard on the preceding night, he could not doubt what was the object of his lordship's present visit; and, strange to say, that Lord Elversfoot, who was waiting in a state of nervous agitation, felt equally persuaded that Mr. Leslie suspected his object. This magnetic influence may seem between two persons very surprising; but it nevertheless exists, and we may attach faith to it without subscribing to all the extravagant theories which have been started on the subject, or vindicating experiments which are manifest absurdities. It is impossible to doubt the existence of certain mysterious agencies; or if any one does doubt them, let them (and it is worth the journey) consult a somnambule at Paris, 16, Rue de Seine, and their doubts will be soon overthrown.

And after all, why should we, because it is now for the first time revealed to us, doubt the existence of a certain power in our minds, of which we were previously unconscious? Think for one moment—what is there more extraordinary than our own frame, which possesses the faculty of recalling events and scenes which have long since passed by? Anatomize the body, and you can discover no record of them; where then are they written? We give different names to certain miraculous qualities which we possess, and then associate a vague indefinite word with a positive idea. But I am not the less startled at a marvellous element in my disposition, because you tell me that it is only memory, and that something else is imagination. He who

possesses the most valuable power of depicting on canvas beauty which he has once beheld, charms over which his soul has dreamed, when the nerves of his hand are moved by the impulse of his mind, is performing a feat as wonderful as she who in a magnetic sleep can read each present thought and tell you the past.

"How do you do, my Lord," said Mr. Leslie, shaking his hand with the cordiality of extreme nervousness: "did you stop long last night? we came away rather early; I was afraid my little bud would be drooping; she is not used to this kind of dissipation, and I think begins to look a little pale. Do you remark it, my Lord?"

He spoke as rapidly as possible to conceal his agitation, whereas he made it still more apparent.

"Why, no—I cannot say I do," replied Lord Elversfoot. "I am of the same opinion as every one else, that a more beautiful girl was never seen in London. As for Lady Sandbeck, she can talk of nothing else, and sighs for such a daughter." The tears filled the old man's eyes as he listened to these encomiums on his child.

"Lady Sandbeck," continued his lordship, "has charged me with a note to Miss Leslie; if she is not engaged she will take her to the Exhibition this afternoon. They have made up a party with the Percivals, and some others; will you join them?"

"Why, I don't think I can," said Mr. Leslie; "I am so much occupied; my canvassing goes on very slowly; the men won't speak out. 'Plenty of time yet, sir,' says one—'see you again—like to talk to Mr. Wheeler—knows my principles, sir—can't give you my hand till I have seen one of the gentlemen alone.' These are the only answers I can get, and it is rather an unsatisfactory state of things to go to the poll with."

"However," said Lord Elversfoot, "it is not a question of going to the poll at this moment; for, from what I see, it is not impossible that the dissolution will be postponed some little time. But, if you will not join Lady Sandbeck's party, will you join another?"

"What other?" asked Mr. Leslie, with an inquiring look.

Here Lord Elversfoot dropped his voice, laid his hand slowly and impressively on Mr. Leslie's arm, and answered, "ours,—our political party, I mean."

"Your party, my Lord! why, I am of en-

tirely the same opinion as your Lordship. I stand on the same interest. 'Everything for the people;' that is my motto, as it is your Lordship's." Lord Elversfoot smiled, for Mr. Leslie left out the last part of the Whig aristocratic creed, "Nothing by the people." "My Lord, I am of your party," continued Mr. Leslie, raising his voice. "I even go a little ahead of your party; my watch is five minutes faster than your Lordship's. Ay, my Lord; there is your corn-law; are you prepared to have entire free trade? Well, then, you will be driven to it. I know something of the commerce of this country, and I tell you, you must free it from its shackles. I remember once travelling in Holland, and I observed there that the people did not build up walls and dykes to oppose the inroads of the ocean, but cut deep canals, so as to admit those waters, which would otherwise have broken down the opposing barriers, and washed everything away in one overwhelming ruin. Take a lesson from this in your dealings with the people; that force, that gigantic power which menaces society, and will inevitably sweep it away like dust, if you oppose it by frail and impotent barriers, may be converted into the elements of your greatness, if you will only direct it into proper channels; this is my view of party, I repeat it, my Lord,—'Everything for the people.'"

Mr. Leslie stopped; the perspiration stood on his brow; he was overcome by his own excitement. The old man still clung to the traditions of his youth. "Oh no, thank God, they can never be rooted out; and of whatever caste you may be, still cling to them; it is a great merit to be faithful to the traditions of your race, and of your faith."

Lord Elversfoot listened attentively, and, strange to say, the earnestness of that simple practical man produced conviction to his mind.

"You are quite right, Mr. Leslie," he said, after a pause, "but it is because I agree so much with you that I ask you the question, will you belong to our party? but I do not mean the party of the House of Commons; I know that we should have your support there. I mean the party of the Government; will you join us?"

"I, my Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Leslie; almost jumping out of his chair with astonishment.

"And who better qualified, Leslie, to join a government than a man who has passed all his life in those occupations which, while

they enlarge the understanding and develop the faculties of the mind, give him the greatest stake and interest in the well-being of the country. I have spoken to several of the cabinet, and they all agree with me. I will not tire you by repeating the several flattering remarks that have been made in connection with your name, but this I am prepared to tell you in all confidence, that if you are prepared to accept the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade, it is at your service."

"My Lord," said Mr. Leslie, his eyes again filling with tears, "I am so proud; this is such an unexpected honour."

"No, Leslie," interrupted the wily diplomatist, "this is no honour; honours come afterwards, if you wish for honours. I repeat to you, that in my opinion the aristocracy of this country must be recruited from the great commercial classes, and if so, the possessor of fifty thousand pounds a-year, the——"

"I beg your pardon, my Lord, forty thousand a-year," said Mr. Leslie; he was too proud to allow the smallest exaggeration.

"Well, of forty thousand pounds a-year, and the proprietor of Castle Melwood, has, as I told you before, after a certain probation in public life, a right to expect a coronet."

Mr. Leslie was quite overwhelmed; what could this accumulation of suggestions, hints, and probabilities mean?

"I do not doubt," he said, after a long pause, during which he vainly endeavoured to conceal the delight which he felt; "I do not doubt that your Lordship's influence could do much, but——"

"And that influence, my dear Mr. Leslie, is quite at your command; it is my great pleasure now to exercise it for your benefit. I wish you would make it my duty to do so."

"In what way? my Lord," said Mr. Leslie; he saw that the decisive moment was approaching.

"Why, Mr. Leslie, we are both of us men of the world; we were at school together, and, although our paths in life have since that time been very different, yet I have always followed your career with attention and the deepest interest. I may be pardoned, therefore, at once entering upon a subject which is very dear to me. I have already told you what my feelings are with respect to Miss Leslie; well, I believe that I am not very wrong in attributing similar opinions to my son, if he is not disagreeable to Miss Leslie, and you think that it would be a desirable marriage, and one that would contribute to

her happiness, why should it not be arranged forthwith; all that I can say is, that, so far as I am myself concerned, nothing would give me greater happiness than to receive Miss Leslie as my son's wife; it is a match of which I think he might be justly proud."

There was the goal of all his wishes attained; a union with a family of a marquis, the son of a great minister, young, handsome, distinguished, the probability of having honours showered upon himself, distinction beyond all which during his hours of toil and patient industry he had ever dared to contemplate; everything was within his reach, he had but to stretch forth his hand to clutch, not the phantom of greatness, but its lofty and proud reality. Before replying he buried his head in his hands, and the visions which swept before his eyes were gorgeous and glittering; he saw his child the admired of the most aristocratic society in Europe; he heard his name pronounced, and men seemed to incline in deference when it was uttered; his ambition stood beside him and unrolled a scroll on which pageant after pageant was painted in rich and costly colouring; he thought not at that moment of Ida's heart, of her woman's pledge; he pictured that gentle and delicate frame only as the prop of his house, the instrument of his greatness, the foundress of his race.

He was only recalled from the reverie into which he had fallen by Lord Elversfoot touching him gently on the arm, while he said, in his calmest voice, "My proposal is not then acceptable to you, Leslie?"

Mr. Leslie raised his head; his face was pale from depth of feeling; great ambition and great grief have the same exhausting influence on the human frame; it was after another short pause he said, "You are wrong, my Lord, it is most acceptable to me."

"I am delighted, I am overjoyed!" exclaimed Lord Elversfoot, forgetting in the delight of the moment all his former doubts and fears, and the circumstance that the principal party had never been consulted in the matter; "I will go immediately and tell my sister. As for Alfred, he will be overjoyed, poor fellow; I know that he is so much in love with Miss Leslie." Lord Elversfoot was quite wild with delight; already he saw the flag of the Luttrells flying on Castle Melwood.

"Stay, my dear Lord, stay a little, there is my daughter Ida."

"Well, surely she can have but one feeling in the matter," replied Lord Elversfoot, a little subdued, for all the impressions which he had

received at Melwood recurred to his mind. "I hope, I think, I believe, she loves Alfred."

"I hope so too," said Mr. Leslie, but his voice belied his words; for now, when his thoughts were directed towards her feelings, he began to lose his confidence. "However, I may as well be frank with you, my Lord," he said at last; "you have been very much so with me, and I will respond in the same spirit. I am forced to confide to your Lordship, that I am not quite sure, I say, I am not quite sure, that Ida's affections are disengaged."

"Hum!" muttered his Lordship.

"I think I told your Lordship, when you were at Melwood, that there was a Mr. Vane living near the castle; he was very much in love with Ida; indeed, they saw a great deal of each other. And so——"

"You were foolish enough, my dear Leslie, to allow a young and inexperienced girl to enter into an engagement with this gentleman, to bind herself down for life at her age, without having had the least intercourse with the world, the least opportunity of knowing her own mind. Well, I should not have imagined this."

"It is, however, quite true," said Mr. Leslie.

"And you consider such an engagement binding; you really could permit a girl to sacrifice herself, as she is on the point of doing, for a childish attachment? I should regret this as much for her sake as our own; she would bitterly repent of it in after life. Think of that, Leslie."

"Why, it is not exactly a settled thing," replied Mr. Leslie; "it is a conditional engagement, if they were both in the same disposition a year hence; in fact, I may say that it is scarcely any engagement at all," he continued, warming himself into the conviction of that which in his heart he well knew to be utterly false; "but certainly I know that Ida was attached to him; since we came to town, I have not spoken to her on the subject, for precisely the reasons suggested by yourself, to enable her to form her own judgment."

"Oh, no doubt that Miss Leslie was attached to this young man," said Lord Elversfoot; "‘cela va sans dire,’ it is the old story in the country, murmuring streams, silent groves, moonbeams and sentiment, all that kind of thing, ‘j’ai passé par là;’ every one has these ideas once in their lives, and then they shake them off as they do their childish dress; sure-

ly no sensible person could for a moment think of sacrificing a whole existence to such nonsense. Look at the difference of the position, my dear Leslie; in the one case she will be at the head of one of the oldest families in England, her children will represent a great house, illustrated by great actions, she will move in a circle worthy of those qualities which endear her to us all. You will be highly honoured, highly considered in life, and you may rise to posts of eminence worthy of your character and mind. Look at the other side of the picture; you remain a country gentleman, very great in your neighbourhood, it is true, but unknown beyond that immediate circle; she will marry a country squire, never be heard of, having thrown away opportunities which cannot be recalled."

"It does not require your Lordship to point out the difference between our positions," said Mr. Leslie, "for I feel it." He was piqued at the tone which Lord Elversfoot had taken, which certainly was not that best calculated to conciliate him; but his Lordship lost not a moment in soothing his feelings.

"My dear Leslie," said he, extending his hand, "if I have spoken too freely, you must forgive me. I am a very simple plain man; when I feel a thing strongly as I do on the present occasion, I cannot avoid expressing my opinions. I have done so rather rudely, I fear."

Mr. Leslie pressed his hand warmly. "Well, my Lord," he said after a pause, "you know my sentiments. I tell you fairly, that I have set my heart on the marriage. Let me consult with Ida. If any arguments that I can make use of can affect her feelings, they shall not be wanting,—of that you may rest assured."

Lord Elversfoot rose from his seat, they had perfectly understood each other, it was an alliance; one of those alliances, so hard in their conditions, so wantonly cruel, an alliance based on the sacrifice of another, on the sacrifice of love and faith upon the altar of ambition.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IDA was sitting in her boudoir painting, while her father was deciding her fate below; after a few touches of her brush, she amused herself with thinking and idly letting it wander over a scrap of paper; when the heart is anxiously occupied, the anxiety in general communicates itself to the hand—she was thinking of Ernest while they were talking of him.

No, she had not forgotten him ; neither had time, flattery, admiration, even diminished her affection ; perhaps, it had rather grown within her heart, because she now had no one in whom she could confide ; for her father had told her that he had advised Ernest not to write until the termination of the period of probation drew near ; she was happy in the certainty of the possession of an affection which she knew was a noble and worthy one ; she asked for no pledges, and made no vows ; if London distracted her for a time, it was only to make the reaction in Ernest's favour stronger. The love of nature and of natural feelings is implanted in all people until fashion roots it out ; she now sighed again for repose, for those green rides and sloping glades ; above all for that gentle voice which added a charm even to the beauties which it praised.

But she knew that this moment which she looked forward to so anxiously would be long postponed ; she saw with regret that her father became deeper and deeper immersed in political excitement ; she almost dreaded the possibility of his success at the general election ; her whole habits of life were so entirely opposed to a London existence, that she felt how deeply she should regret having to renew it again each year ; if it had not been for the recollection of Ernest, she could almost have lamented ever having left Liverpool.

There she sat a picture beautiful to gaze on. And yet the observer might have been saddened ; for who can look into the heaven's light of a young and dimpling face, and not feel that there is a day when that light will be dimmed, when the dimples must fade. Who can gaze on blue mountains and bluer lake, and not lament that clouds will sometime roll over the mountains, and waves ruffle the waters ? Who can walk forth on a balmy summer evening, and not remember the darkness which is soon to overspread the sky ?

Oh, the curse of knowledge ! knowledge which gives man power, but renders him miserable ; which by teaching him to tremble at the future, destroys the blessings of the present. "Visions of childhood, stay, oh, stay !" dreams of youth, fade not before me ; let me cherish my illusion, and heed not the future. Oh teach me to forget that if there is a principle of life, there is likewise a principle of decay implanted in all things animate and inanimate, material or immaterial. Solomon

prayed for knowledge, I pray for ignorance ; remove from my heart that intelligence which mocks my fancies, that reason which controls my imagination. Oh, make me a child once more, when, if the sun rose brightly in the heavens, I cared not for the possible clouds of the morrow ; when I had confidence in an unfulfilled destiny ; when I hoped all things, loved all things, believed in all things.

Ida was still buried in thought when her father entered the room.

He had passed half-an-hour alone since Lord Elversfoot had left him, in that struggle, the most terrible which can be carried on in any man's mind, the struggle between love of self and love of another, between the generous and the mean ; he could not pretend to be ignorant of Ida's deep love for Ernest ; he knew instinctively how strong that feeling was. Was it not a cruel case, whichever way she might decide, to place her in the painful alternative of judging between two opposite duties, between her duty to him as her father, and her duty to the man to whom her faith was pledged, between her filial affection and her woman's love ? At one moment he had almost come to the resolution of going to Lord Elversfoot, and at once giving him a decided negative, and withdrawing from the representation of Marylebone, and retiring to Castle Melwood. He put on his hat and walked forth with this intention ; but what slight circumstances affect our destinies ! It was a drawing-room, he saw carriage after carriage rolling by ; one was passing in all the pomp of wealth and power, with two tall powdered footmen behind it ; it was Lady Clarenceville, who, in the midst of all her grandeur, and the admiration by which she was encircled, retained a simplicity and kindness of character which a child might envy, and who brought up her daughter, Lady Augusta, so as to make her the delight and ornament of society ; so unspoilt was she by the universal homage which was paid her. Mr. Leslie was surprised to see the beautiful head nod to him most gracefully, then the check-string was pulled violently, the carriage drew up at the pavement, to the admiration of the gathering crowd, who thought the large bouquets which the coachman and footmen wore were the finest specimens of horticultural produce they had ever beheld.

Mr. Leslie went to the carriage door.

"My dear Mr. Leslie," said Lady Clarenceville ; "my affection for your beautiful daughter must be my excuse for stopping you, but I

could not pass you without congratulating you on an event which must make you very happy."

Mr. Leslie was not far wrong in his suspicion as to the event she alluded to, but he pretended ignorance.

"Why, surely, it is not a false report," said the lady. "She is actually engaged to Lord Linton—is it not so?"

He had not the moral courage to give a decided negative; on the contrary, he had the weakness to add force to the report, by saying, "Not actually."

"Oh, very well," said Lady Clarenceville: "I see it will be all right. I can assure you I am very pleased; she is an universal favourite; good-bye. I have no time to lose. We have not the *entrée* any longer, and the doors will be shut."

And the pageant passed on.

Mr. Leslie stood still for a while; here he had, for a moment's vanity, almost shut himself out from the possibility of retracting; because the great lady had spoken of the matter as settled, he had not the resolution positively to deny it; now, indeed, what course was he to take; he must see Ida immediately, and try every argument to induce her to meet his wishes.

He did not dare reflect any longer, but entered the house, and in a few moments, as we have said, came to the room where Ida was sitting.

"Oh, papa!" she exclaimed, looking up from her work, or rather from her thoughts, the consciousness of which deepened the colour in her cheeks. "You quite startled me; but you are not well?"

She was justified in the supposition, for his cheek was very pale, and his legs trembled as he sat down on the chair. The father knew that in his heart he had violated his daughter's faith, and he trembled before her.

"What is the matter, papa?" she repeated.

"Nothing, my dear child, nothing. I have been a little flurried, that is all. I have received a sudden announcement," he continued, with a rapidity as if to unburden his heart as speedily as possible. "You know that Lord Elversfoot has been here; we have had a long conversation, my dearest Ida, and that conversation affects you."

"Me, dearest papa!" and the colour left her cheek, which became pale as marble; she anticipated the announcement.

"Lord Elversfoot has done you the honour to propose that you should marry his son."

There was a pause; her eyes were fixed, as if, through the vista of years, she could see the perspective of misery before her; at last she rose from her seat, and threw her arm round the old man's neck, and whispered in his ear, "You, of course, could not entertain the proposal, father?"

"I did not give him a decided answer," was Mr. Leslie's reply.

"Not a decided answer!" she said. "Oh, then it would be unjust not to send to him immediately, to tell him that I am engaged to another, that you yourself sanctioned that engagement, that I have never for a moment wavered in my feelings; all the distractions of London have only served to make me more deeply sensible of the happiness to be derived from tranquil affection. No, no, dearest papa, if you do change in any thing, rather lessen the term of probation which you have appointed; let me be united sooner to Ernest. I am sure we were far happier before we entered this society—a society for which I am unsuited, and to which I have no pretension."

"No pretension!" exclaimed Mr. Leslie, shaking her arm from his neck, and his eyes glowing with indignation. "No pretension! Lord Elversfoot does not think himself degraded by this alliance; the proposal originates with him and not with me. I do not find," he continued, his voice still rising with his anger, "that my claims to be admitted into the first society of this country are ever questioned except by my own child. I remember that when I first purchased Castle Melwood, you made the same kind of remark."

How many will forgive and forget injuries, insults, wrongs of every description, but never forget an observation that wounds their vanity.

Baron Wessenberg, in his admirable "*Souvenirs et Pensées*," has recorded, in one sentence, a great fact, which is the secret of one-half of all family differences, "*On n'est souvent mécontent des autres que parcequ'on l'est de soi-même.*" In the present instance, Mr. Leslie was heartily annoyed with himself; he felt the full force of all Ida's observations, but his regrets only shaped themselves in forms of anger against her, and at this moment he was deeply irritated and wounded at her unlucky observation.

"If you knew how miserable you make me, when you speak so harshly to me, and say such unkind things, you would refrain

from doing so, my dearest papa," said Ida, crying bitterly. "I have done nothing to merit them. I never gave Lord Linton the least encouragement; you know how his society has been forced upon me. Now I wish that we had never come to London, or even never left Liverpool. We were very happy then, and I asked for nothing beyond my home; now I see so much misery in store for me. I would not pain and distress you, and at the same time I cannot deny my love for Ernest. Papa, be just, and keep your promise to me."

Mr. Leslie was touched and softened by his daughter's tears. He saw those visions of greatness (so dear to old age, when love and its train of softer affections have swept by,) fleeing away before him. With all his material pursuits, he was a man of very strong passions and violent impulses; and when he thought how nearly his ambitious dreams were of being fulfilled, and that they were all thwarted by what he now considered a foolish attachment, when he reflected that the whole fabric he had reared with so much toil and care would now break down—that he must tell Lord Elversfoot the marriage was out of the question, and give up all those hopes which are dearer to old age than love is to youth, he could not restrain his feelings, but, burying his head into his hands, the large tears streamed between his wrinkled fingers.

Ida was shocked; it was only the second time in her life she had seen her father so affected; the first was at her mother's death-bed, and she remembered then that mother's injunction to obey him in all things. It is a terrible thing to see an old man weep, for in youth there is always some one to wipe the tears and drink the sighs—in old age men must weep alone and unpitied.

"Oh, papa," she exclaimed, "forgive me!"

She could resist harsh, unkind, unjust words and accusations, but she could not resist those tears. When he again drew her on his knee, and, raising his head, she saw the traces of his tears on his furrowed cheeks, when he again called her his darling, and told her he had nothing to forgive, she felt how dear that old man was to her; she asked herself, whether it was not selfish on her part to place the new affection of a young man, so little known to her, into the balance against the love which her father bore her, the continuous love of seventeen years; she thought of all this, and clung to his embrace.

"Ida, my child, my darling child!" said

he, after a long pause, while his aged fingers played with the long ringlets of her fair head, "let it be as you choose; but, as it is, I must ask you to forgive me for having asked you to make such a sacrifice for me; and you will forgive me, when you remember, my darling, what my course of life has been. You can recall the time, when I toiled day after day in my office, to the utter ruin of my health, to which labour I owe my premature old age. And what was the object of all this trouble and anxiety? It was you, Ida. I hoped to live to see you pre-eminent amongst those whose superior I felt you were, in person and mind. I wished to accumulate a fortune, that the magnates of this land should welcome you among them, and greet your presence. I attained this object. I purchased Castle Melwood. Then my hope was, that I might be the founder of one of those great houses which are the glory of this land, and the envy of all others, and I thought you would aid me in this; to my surprise I found you were, after a very short acquaintance, attached to Mr. Vane; this was not the kind of marriage I had anticipated, but I liked the young man, and I did not desire to wound his feelings, or mortify your affections. So I gave my consent, upon the conditions you are aware of, that the marriage depended on your being both in the same disposition a year hence, and on your not carrying on any correspondence during that period. I thought that the severity of these conditions would have proved to you both that my heart was not in my consent. Well then, my child, you arrive in town, you are welcomed with a cordiality we could scarcely have anticipated, you are the centre of all admiration, the topic of all conversation. A nobleman, a marquis of high official rank, of great position, proposes that you should marry his son, a young man well received in every society, handsome, distinguished, and against whom I have never heard a word said, except that he is disposed to be rather extravagant; a marriage, therefore, which must do more than fulfil every expectation I ever entertained, and you reject it; but, my dear child, you do not know the value of this connexion, the high price which I set upon it; you can have very little idea of the importance which it is to myself; by your marriage with Lord Linton, it is most probable I should some day become a peer of the realm." His heart bounded at the word, and he raised his head proudly only again to let it sink in sorrow on his bosom.

And now was to commence one of those struggles of affection, in which the oldest ever comes off successful ; so sincere on her part, in part so sincere on his, for he truly loved his child, even while he thought he could combine that love with his ambition,—God with Mammon.

“My father!” whispered Ida, “do with me what you will.”

“No, my child,” he replied. “No, Ida ; marry Ernest Vane ; never mind your old father. I shall be happy enough ; or, if I should not be so, my life, after its long labours, is not likely to be much extended. No, Ida, I will write to Lord Elversfoot that you decline the marriage. You shall not be made unhappy for me, my sweetest child ; if my dreams pass away unrealized, if the expectations of my life have no fulfilment, I am to blame for dreaming so vainly, and forming such preposterous expectations. You shall marry Ernest, my child ; you shall marry him.”

Such a picture of happiness presented itself to Ida’s imagination that she was on the very point of clasping her father’s neck, and expressing her joy, when, as she turned, she observed that his under-jaw fell, his eyes became fixed, the hands fell powerless by his side ; he was in a fit.

The excitement of the last few weeks, and especially of that morning, had produced a second attack of the nervous system, of which he had already had one at Liverpool, some years since, on the occasion of the loss of one of his most richly freighted vessels. Ida had no recollection of that event, so when she saw him in this terrible state, she for the moment thought that he was dead, and her fearful shrieks alarmed the whole household. The oldest of the servants, who had been with Mr. Leslie since he first started in life, lost not a moment in applying all the remedies calculated to avert fatal consequences, until the arrival of the medical men. As for Ida, she moved about like one who has no clear comprehension of the terrible calamity which has befallen her. When Sir Henry Halsey came, he found Ida in a state of mental excitement, which almost bordered on derangement, and requiring as much attention as Mr. Leslie, whose attack was really not a very severe one, although it demanded great care. “Above all,” said the kind-hearted physician, to Ida, “he must be kept as quiet as possible, and avoid anything that can by any possibility annoy him.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Ida, clasping her hands in a paroxysm of grief, “I will sacrifice myself, I will sacrifice all the world, to save him.”

“It is not, fortunately, a question of much sacrifice, my dear young lady,” said Sir Henry ; “if such a necessity did arise you would doubtless make it. No, all you have to do is to see that he is not subject to unnecessary intrusion ; attend strictly to this, and you will do quite enough. There is only one other little point, which perhaps you have not sufficiently thought of—you must take care of your own health ; for to judge from a few expressions he let fall, your welfare evidently occupies his whole mind. He spoke of the sacrifice which he was prepared to make for you, and of an affection beyond all understanding. You must not go to him for the present.”

“How selfish, how cruel, I have been !” thought Ida.

She disobeyed the Doctor’s injunctions the moment he had left ; she rose from the bed on which she had been lying ; she could not prevent herself from looking at her father. She stole to his room on tiptoe, and listened attentively ; he was sleeping. There he lay ; his features still bore the impress of the struggle through which he had passed, and one of his hands was closed, as in the agony of contraction ; he breathed heavily and convulsively. Ida stood by his bed-side, not daring to waken him or to express her grief, but her heart struggled back to the days of her earliest youth, as a bird returns to its nest, and the fish to their parent stream.

Poor child ! as yet she had gone through but little suffering ; yet, perhaps, the first breath of cold air, upon the nurtured and well-cared-for child of fortune, seems the bitterest ; after a certain time, let it blow as it list, we but muffle ourselves up the more warmly in selfish comforts. And the pictures which then presented themselves to her mind were all associated with that strong man’s love ; she recalled a thousand little kindnesses long since forgotten, and as she now feared at the time not accepted with sufficient gratitude. Could she for a moment place her own desires, however powerful, her own wishes, however reasonable, in opposition to the desires and wishes of him who now lay there, and whose life perhaps depended on her ready obedience. No, she would not, she could not. She would not promise to marry Luttrell, for to marry one man, with affection for another

filling her heart, appeared to her to be that which indeed it is, a terrible crime, and a hideous mockery; to press the same pillow with one to whom she was indifferent, to be taken to the heart of one with whom she had no sympathy, seemed to her fearful to contemplate; and yet how many go through this night after night, sometimes it is true with bitter tears, but yet go through it and live. The contest in her heart was between two affections; she determined to listen to the voice of the oldest, and she was right in her judgment. She knelt down by her father's side, and prayed for him; she took his hand and pressed it to her lips, imprinted a kiss on that cheek, now parched and feverish, and then she turned away to fulfil her great sacrifice; to write to Ernest.

She left the bed-room and went to the drawing-room; until that moment she had forgotten the personal existence of Lord Elversfoot and Luttrell. She had been thinking of them rather as abstract ideas than as real personages in the drama of her life. So it is the resolutions made in privacy and retirement are so difficult of performance, for they are based on the airy shapes which imagination takes; but they have to be carried out in set forms of words, by cold, simple, practical means. When Ida entered the drawing-room, she found the servant at the door with a message from Lady Sandbeck, who was waiting for her in the carriage. "He had told her ladyship that Mr. Leslie was very ill, but she wished to know whether she could speak for one moment to Miss Leslie." Poor Ida! she was not in a state to see any one, least of all to see Lady Sandbeck; she sent a message that Mr. Leslie was so unwell, it was not in her power to leave him, and it was with a thrill of pleasure that she heard the carriage drive away.

But, strange to say, this little incident greatly weakened the resolution to which she had come; it brought her back again to real life, to the difficulty of her position. Above all, now that her father's countenance was not present to animate her sense of self-sacrifice, she thought of Ernest, and when she once began to think of Ernest, she rested her head on her hand, and her tears fell like a warm summer shower over the paper. If it is a hard thing to accustom ourselves in a day to a change of habits, is it not a harder thing to accustom ourselves to the changes of affection, of sympathy, of those sweet ties which fill the heart with gladness? Is it strange inconsis-

ency, is it accusing Ida of unpardonable weakness, if we say that her heart now flowed in a different channel; that all her mind reverted to Ernest to the extent of the sacrifice which she was called upon to make. She was young, with a long life before her, and shadows, clouds, and darkness rested on it. Once, and once only, she thought of going to Lord Elversfoot and praying for his sympathy; of asking him to exercise his influence in undoing all the evil his words had accomplished. But the thought soon swept by her; she could not meet Luttrell again in her present frame of mind. She trembled at an avowal which was to put her in his power; then what course was she to take?

A sudden idea occurred to her—she would write at once to Ernest, and beg him to come to London. She would throw herself on his judgment, on his affection, on his sympathy; he was high-minded and generous; he, at least, would never lead her into error; he would see her father. For the moment, the idea gleamed upon her like the light of Hope; just as, amid the breakers, the sailor buffetting against wind and wave feels a thrill of pleasure when a beacon-light first flashes across the deep, although, on after thought, it is only the signal of a danger which he should shun.

Self delusion! which never deserts us. Was there no secret desire of seeing Ernest, if only once again, in the course which Ida decided on? And did she calculate on the power of the affection which she expressed in each line? Alas! so contradictory are human actions and intentions, that in this letter she did more to confirm Ernest's affection than at any previous moment of their acquaintance; so "the grass grows beneath the stone, and affections gather force by being crushed." She told Ernest everything connected with Lord Linton, all that she had learnt of his family, of her father's growing ambition, of his hopes, of his danger. She implored him to come immediately to London to give her his counsel, to save her, she was forced to use the term, "to save her from herself."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Una muta, una ostinata, ed alta,
Malinconia mortate, appanna in lei
Quel sì vivido sguardo, e piangesse ella
Ma Innanzi a me tacila stassi; e sempre
Pregno ha di pranto, e asciutto sempre ha il ciglio
Niego ella il duol, mentre di giorno in giorno
Io dal dolor strugger la veggio."

So thought Ernest, as he saw his sister pining away, day by day. Do what he would,

nothing excited, nothing interested her; and what was even worse to him than her melancholy look, was the painful effort of gaiety which she seemed to think it necessary to make when he was present. He did not like again to renew the subject of Beaumaris; it had led, he was constrained to admit it, to somewhat of a mutual restraint. But he could not blind himself to the fact that she was changing rapidly. It is not to say that the roses left the cheek, for the cheek may lose its colour, and yet the heart remain fresh as spring. But the heart of youth was wanting there, old ties, old faces, old affections, pleased her no more.

That home, to which all men sooner or later return, and which all love, where they cast off the forms and fashions of the world, and become again simple men, beings of a large account here and hereafter—that home was now nothing to her. Vainly he used to try to induce her to take an interest in the school which she had founded, in the cottages which she used to visit, when kind actions were doubled in value by the kind words which attended on them. Vainly he took her to the spots where as a child she used to play so happily and watch the fleecy clouds as they sped across the blue sky. Vainly, above all, did she attend the village church, that church under the shadow of whose spire she used to stand as a child, when solemn and beautiful thoughts filled her eyes with tears and her heart with faith. It seemed to her that a cloud—alas! not of glory—separated her from that altar where she used to kneel, and even from her mother's grave, which she no longer dared to desecrate with chaplets of flowers. For she thought that the bud and the blossom were polluted by her touch since she had compromised her character in the opinion of men. Oh! you who in the world have seen much of evil, even although you may have remained uncontaminated by it, smile not with doubly refined contempt for this poor child, contempt for her weakness, and then with contempt for her regrets; remember too what you were in your innocence as a blue-eyed child, and ask yourselves whether if you have not sinned it may not be either from the absence of temptation or of opportunity, or, basest of all motives, through fear. Ask yourselves, ay, in those moments which sooner or later fall upon all men

When gathering clouds obscure the view,
And hopes are dark, and friends are few;

When the chariot wheels of pomp, and va-

nity, and ambition, roll heavily, ask yourselves then whether you are the person to sit in judgment on others; ask yourselves, if you had been in misery and want, might you not have stretched out the hand to take the loaf to save the life? If you had been crushed by the world, a prey to every vile passion and evil principle, might you not have risen against the law, and asserted the rights of man? And above all, if you had possessed ardent passions, if you had known yourself capable of loving not wisely, but, alas! too well; if you had felt the breath of the loved one on your cheek, and the whisper, low as the softest music, in your ear, might you not have turned an attentive ear to the voice of the evil one, and yet expected forgiveness?

They were together, Ernest and Algitha, when the letter arrived which was to seal his fate and compromise hers. The moment he cast his eyes on the hand-writing, a sickening sensation filled his heart; he at once felt assured that something of great moment must have occurred, for Ida to have written to him instead of to Algitha; he could not open the letter, but leant for support against the balustrade of the terrace.

"Algitha, you shall open this," he said, putting the letter into her hand; "it is very odd, a man ought to be above such superstitions; but I cannot help it, I have a presentiment of some evil."

"No, no, I hope not," said Algitha; "but I will read it to you, if you like." She broke the seal, while Ernest looked on with all his heart concentrated in his countenance; but, as she perused the page, her face grew paler and paler; she let it fall from her hand, and then clasped her hands together; she stood calm as one transfixed, like the sea which is boiling and raging below, when the tornado sweeps over the Atlantic, and yet whose surface is stilled by the very violence of the tempest. It was with a look of utter misery, the concentrated energy of despair, that she slowly uttered the words,—“You were right, Ernest; all is over now; he has broken his promise, and I am abandoned.”

"Who says so, who dare say such a thing of my sister?" exclaimed Ernest, shaking the balustrade in his energetic violence.

"I say it of myself; no one says it of me," continued Algitha: "on you too, my brother, the blow will fall heavily; Luttrell, who loved me, now marries Ida!"

"May the heavens crush him!" shrieked Ernest; he seized the letter, and in one mo-

ment had made himself master of its contents. Algitha had not read it attentively, she only saw that Lord Linton, who as Ida said was formerly called Mr. Luttrell, had proposed to her. The first shock of Algitha's announcement had been so great to Ernest, that now when he perceived that Ida's faith remained unchanged, that her whole heart was his, he felt comparatively relieved; nay, more, he saw in a moment that, from the circumstances of the case, the marriage never could or should take place. He was so occupied with his own feelings, that he had quite forgotten Algitha; when he turned to look for her, she had vanished; he went in search of her, and found her in her room kneeling by her bedside. Yes, now that the full force of her punishment, of her folly, had fallen upon her, she felt that she could pray; she had now, indeed, no hope; but the hope she had possessed before was of so vague and cruel a kind, that it could never satisfy the heart; so she derived strength even from the depth of her misery—at least she could fall no lower; and she had one comfort, she could be revenged.

Algitha's was precisely one of those characters, to whom anxiety is the worst of all evils; she had lingered on from day to day, we can scarcely say expecting some letter, but thinking it possible some letter might arrive; every evening she had retired to bed broken-hearted and dispirited; now that the whole perfidy of this man was brought to view, after the first shock had passed, she felt comparatively calm; but above all she resolved that Ida should never marry Luttrell; and when, therefore, Ernest told her that he should go to London immediately, she at once consented to remain alone for a few days, and advised his departure.

But he did not tell her of the fearful thoughts which were passing in his mind; he did not dare to express before her his thirst for vengeance. Now that he had no doubt of Ida's affection, that, on the contrary, he felt more than ever assured of possessing her (for Mr. Leslie never could resist the evidence of Luttrell's duplicity and falsehood); now that his whole feelings could flow unchecked towards his sister, his hatred against the man who had destroyed his sister's happiness became uncontrollable; it did not break out in invective, it did not express itself in vague threats, it was calm, resolute, compressed, and therefore, terrible; and yet when he left Algitha, he did not part from her as one parting from a beloved sister, on the eve of great

danger; all his principles were opposed to the practice of duelling; he did not contemplate taking a human being's life, guilty as that man was; most especially when from the very circumstances of the case that man was prevented from defending it; but he did purpose some act of vengeance,—a denunciation which should satisfy society of the guilt of the man whom it had countenanced; he did pant to blast him, as with the withering sentence of the destroying angel; all the violence of his nature, so long concealed even from himself, or when aroused, controlled by fixed principles, was excited on this occasion, and gave a new development to his character.

His preparations were made in the shortest space of time; within two hours he was rolling on towards the metropolis. During the whole distance which separated him from his goal, never for a moment did the passion of vengeance cease to work within him; and yet to those who passed him he seemed calm. They saw little in him except a young man rattling forward towards the great centre of amusement, and many envied him as he passed. So we ever move on, forming judgments on others, and yet knowing as little of the real state of our own minds as the ground does of the fruit which it bears. Ernest thought that he knew himself, that he could trust himself; alas! he was soon to learn how weak is that man who trusts in moments of trouble to the strength of the resolutions which he has formed in moments of calmness and repose.

He drove to the Burlington Hotel, and then immediately to Grosvenor Place; his agitation as he drew near Ida's house was almost more than he could sustain; now he feared everything for Ida, for Mr. Leslie, for himself. Oh! he thought, was it like this I expected to meet her in whose heart I had garnered up my own, with fear, with hesitation, and doubt.

The servant said that Mr. Leslie was still very unwell, but Miss Leslie was at home.

He followed the servant up the richly carpeted staircase; in this house of grief and anxiety, the same forms were still preserved; the servants stood up and ranged themselves in order as he passed, for when are the barriers of etiquette ever broken down? when does society lose its second nature? The birth, the death, and the marriage, might take place in the same house, on the same day, and the dinner bell would still ring. Ah, yes, there is one event, which a little subverts domestic

economy, and for which a dinner hour is changed—that is a ball.

The servant marshalled the way, and in a loud voice announced his name. Ida was not in the first room, and Ernest passed through it to the boudoir, where she was sitting.

He waited one moment until the door was closed behind him, and then he seized her in his arms, and covered her face with kisses.

“Ida, my own beloved Ida!”

She did not strive to release herself from his embrace; she knew not what sentence he was about to pronounce, what was to be her doom; whether this passionate utterance was the dawn of a life of bliss for her, or a glimpse of happiness which was never again to be hers; she did not venture to think, but her hand was clasped in his, their fingers were twined together; for the first time in her life, her heart beat against his own. She did not consider the circumstances under which Ernest had arrived; she forgot her father lying suffering and still speechless up-stairs. For the first moment of her life, the boundless capacity of love and passion burst upon her in its greatness and its glory.

“Then we are not to part,” she murmured—and he answered “never.” Again there was a long silence, during which

The beating of their own hearts
Was the only sound they heard.

At last, she raised her head, and, trembling with agitation, murmured her father's name.

“He never will allow the marriage now,” said Ernest, with a bitter and meaning smile.

“His heart is set upon it,” replied Ida. “It is distressing for me to tell you so, but you cannot imagine what he has suffered the last two days. He is rather better now; but Sir Henry Halsey says that another attack may prove fatal to him.”

“In spite of this, I repeat it,” said Ernest, “he will never allow the marriage, or, if he did, even though he were perishing, I would not, or, if we both did, you would not.”

“What can you mean?” replied Ida; “you alarm me by your earnestness; do explain to me, for God's sake!”

“Well then, I mean,” continued Ernest, his voice and colour rising as he spoke, and his whole frame quivering with agitation, “I mean, that the man who has proposed to marry you is the blackest scoundrel that ever this hot-bed of vice and passion could have produced; like Gehazi, he is ten times more

leprous than the Naamans by whom he is surrounded; his love is ten times more cruel than the hate of the bitterest foe. I have come to this town to denounce him, as the minister of all that is black, corrupt, and accursed. I know not the man, but my voice shall find him out; and, with the voice of scorn, I will denounce him. Ida, this man—this Luttrell—this nobleman—this beau idéal of fashionable circles, has promised to marry my sister, and compromised her reputation.” And his frame shook convulsively; he trembled like a young child, when the wind blows through the shutters at night; or like the bride when she stands at the altar with the man she hates and despises at her side; his tears did not flow this time.

“You are right!” exclaimed Ida, after a long pause. “I would sooner die than marry such a man; but be calm, Ernest, be calm;” and she passed her soft hand across his forehead.

He took that hand within his own. “Calm, like that man, Ida, when with fiendish calculations he could win that poor child's affections, when he stood between her heart and her heart's life, when he could with the refinement of calculation make pledges he never intended to fulfil. Yes, he was calm when he could lie a young girl out of her happiness, and at the same time lie to you, so that you believed in his honour. He was calm when he cautiously refrained from uttering one word which could associate him in your mind with Algitha, and thus awaken your suspicions; for, of course, I see that Algitha told you all, except the name and title of her lover; no, Ida, my own Ida, strong passions, real earnest feelings, are not expressed with calmness. I am not calm when I think of my love for you, I am not calm when I express my hatred and withering contempt for this man.”

“And what will you do, Ernest?” for he made a move as if about to leave the room.

“I will seek him out, and save you the trouble of rejecting him; I will tell him that he is unmasked, that his false-heartedness is discovered, and bid him fulfil his promise to my sister.”

“And if he refuse?”

“I will blast him in the eyes of all men.”

“Speak to him kindly, Ernest,” said Ida.

“I beseech you to be mild with him, for he is of a quick and irritable temper. You wish him to marry Algitha; then let me implore you not to defeat the object you have at heart,

by anger and precipitancy; he has greatly erred, be you greatly merciful."

"Good, kind, generous Ida, I will do as you desire me; for yours and Algitha's sake I will be calm."

"And Mr. Leslie?" said Ernest, after a pause.

"I am afraid of the effect this may have upon him, but it is unavoidable; he must be made acquainted with all," replied Ida. "I will repeat to him what you have told me; I know that, when he listens to the truth, he will be the first to drive that man from his presence. Oh, no! he never would sacrifice me, however great his ambition may be, to a man whom he despised. He imagined Lord Linton all that he should be; he was the bosom friend of his father, and Lord Elversfoot knew how to please papa. No, Ernest, you may go in confidence that I am yours for ever. I will write to Algitha, and will tell her how deeply I love you; how fondly I believe that even for her there are still blessings in store. Yes; for do you know, Ernest, I have a kind of presentiment that even now it will all end well, and that Algitha will be happy."

"She can never be happy with that man," said Ernest, "but she may avoid being disgraced through him."

Again and again, before leaving the room finally, he returned to say farewell to Ida. Again and again he pressed her in his arms, and she whispered her gratitude to Providence for having granted to her the idea of writing to him, and for having taught her how to love.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SMALL party were dining in a private room, at one of the St. James's Street clubs. There were men of all classes; men who thought very much of themselves, and men who were quite willing to drop down life undisturbed by aught but their appetites, men of hard wrestling ambition, and men of idle and dissolute lives; among which last class was Luttrell.

"You were not in the Park to-day, Linton?" said Seymour.

"Why do you allude to that fact?" said Sir William Disney; "why, of course we all know where he was. Old Leslie, they say, was seized with a fit two or three days since, and ever since that time Miss Leslie and our friend Linton have disappeared. He must have been about some goodly work of consolation; it's all arranged, is it not?" he continued.

"All I can say is, that I have not been

much in Grosvenor Place lately," said Luttrell, evading a direct answer.

"Oh, come, Luttrell, what a shame of you, shirking the question," said Harry Wingrove, one of the wittiest and most generous men of the day, possessing the very singular and admirable quality of saying the wittiest things, but never wounding a prejudice or losing a friend, and yet he was always shooting his darts.

"I tell you," said Luttrell, somewhat piqued, for he had an indistinct notion that everything was not quite so right in Grosvenor Place as he could desire, "that there is nothing arranged about the marriage; my father likes the old bore, and thinks it essential to please him; but really there is nothing settled. I wish to God there was."

"Well, here is to the heiress," cried Seymour. "What shall I give you, claret or burgundy?"

"What burgundies are there?" said Luttrell; "if it is a first class wine I will taste some; I mean volnay, pomard, romanée-chambertin."

"Come, taste claret, it is cooler for you," cried Sir William Disney; "you have been filling tumbler after tumbler of champagne; if your object was to drown care, she must have been in the Humane Society's receiving-house by this time, and on the point of resuscitation."

"I have often thought," said Seymour, "what fools people are to try to bring you to life again when once you are almost dead; it is the greatest unkindness you can do some men; for instance, take Luttrell there,—what the deuce would be the use of bringing him to life—poor devil! going to be married."

"Most men," said Wingrove, "are never utterly floored until they are married, but Luttrell was determined not to marry until he was utterly floored."

And, with the loud laugh, the ruby bottle went round.

"Don't chaff me so much, my dear fellows," said Luttrell; "listen to that wonderful story Disney is telling."

Disney was delighted at Luttrell's suggestion; up to this time his audience had been limited to one very young tyro, who was opening his mouth and gaping with astonishment at his wondrous tales of Alroy; but now that he was sure of attention, he left the lad to snatch what crumbs of information he might collect from him, and turned to the admiring circle.

"I was giving young Seabright a bit of information which he will not find in any book, but which will be of infinitely greater value to him than whole libraries of useful knowledge."

"Well, come, impart it to us," exclaimed Seymour.

"Why, imagine I found this young gentleman eating petits patés à la Béchamel, that wretched invention of the Regency; why, if anything could stamp the Regent Orleans in my mind as a fool, it was the fact of his having such a man as the Vicomte de Béchamel for cook."

"How can you say so?" said Seymour, who was always piquing Sir William into recounting some extraordinary anecdote; he was the matador of the circle; "the Vicomte de Béchamel was the first to ice champagne and let claret stand in tepid water; not a bad hint, by-the-by, the latter, for claret should always have the chill taken off it."

"Well, let me continue," cried the exquisite Disney; "of course I checked my young friend in this monstrous act, and I told him, as I tell you all, and if you live twenty years you will never hear such a fact enunciated again, there are two things essential to cooking—consistency and flavour."

"What the deuce does he mean?" cried Wingrove.

"It is a great idea, and must be received with attention," he continued; "I only attained to this height of knowledge after ten years of a miserable existence, and then by a wonderful, I may say a providential, accident. Now mark, when you have difficulty in choosing between two dishes, ask yourselves this question, which has consistency, which has flavour? if you obtain either one of these qualities, the dish is a good one; if you obtain both, it is the perfection of the culinary art; take, for instance, turbot, it has consistency, but no flavour; it is very tolerable, but you feel it wants something, so you take lobster-sauce to make up for the deficiency; any dish that requires extraneous aids to make it palatable is second-rate. A soufflet then has flavour, but no consistency, so it comes in almost as a hors-d'œuvre, and people eat it rather for amusement and for the sake of twirling their spoon about than for any material excellence which it possesses; but turtle and venison, there you have both consistency and flavour, there you have condiments which are worthy to be placed on an

imperial table. Turtle and venison! well may the city monarchs thrive and roll in aldermanic dignity. Imagine that this great truth, so long concealed from those who were daily practising it, should have been revealed to me: so it is; practice and theory are not always combined. I have heard it said, that they who built the pyramids knew nothing of the centre of gravitation; while the man who invented gunpowder had never seen a musket."

"Capital," said the unflinching Seymour; "but I have seen men take punch with turtle, and currant jelly with venison."

"I once heard that a man did so," replied Sir William Disney.

"And applying this principle of consistency and flavour to your politics," said Wingrove, "I can account for your wonderful success."

Sir William paid no attention to this hit, but continued; "I will tell you where I learnt this great fact, I could not have originated it. I was yachting in the Mediterranean in search of—an Idea—I found at last that there was only one great nation in the world, that was the Turks; so I went and fought for them against those scoundrel Greeks, wretched fellows the Greeks! but the Turks, a nation of gentlemen, the only civilized people in Europe. Believe me, my dear fellows, no nation can be civilized who are not polygamists; remember that, Luttrell, as you are going to be married. One day my little boat, in which I was fishing, was chased by a party of Sooliotes; I had to run for it, and landed at a small village in one of the numerous islands which lie in the gulph of Cattaro. Some Turks came down to receive me; what was my astonishment to find them with magnificent beards, you never saw such beards, at least an inch longer than those belonging to any other Turk I ever saw, and countenances radiant as if they had been washed with soap every morning, a thing I knew to be impossible. It turned out they had been for three months blockaded by a Greek force, who thought they had no provisions, nor had they any for some time. What do you think they had been living on these three months? maraschino and red mullets—consistency and flavour."

"What?" cried Seymour.

"It is a fact, and from them I learnt this truth about consistency and flavour. The red mullet was the only fish that abounded there, and the maraschino was taken from a small

palace which one of the pachas had deserted ; and it was the only thing the fishermen would not touch. Now what do you think of my adventures ?”

What they thought of them they expressed ; but Luttrell was silent and subdued. Was it the shadow of his destiny crossing his grave ?

“ And now, Seymour, give us a song,” they all cried.

“ What will you have, a lively or a melancholy one ?” he said. Every one chose a melancholy one ; they had been gay long enough. “ Come, I will sing you those beautiful lines of Barry Cornwall—

“ The wind is bitter, the night is wild ;
From the roof comes plunging the drowning rain,
Without in sorrow 's the world's poor child,
Weeping aloud in grief and pain.
No one heareth her, no one heedeth her,
But hunger her friend, with his cold gaunt hand,
Graspeth her throat, whispering harshly,
“ What dost thou in a Christian land ?”

“ The rain is bitter, the night is cold,
Yet riot and luxury brawl within.
Slaves are waiting in crimson and gold,
Tending the nod of a child of sin.
Bright eyes are glistening, the wine is sparkling,
Up in each glass to its beaded brim.
Jesters are laughing, and parasites quaffing,
Happiness, honour, and all for him.

“ She who doth stand in yon piteous weather,
She once was a village maid,
Listen'd to love on the moon-lit heather,
Had gentleness, vanity, maiden shame.
Now her allies are the tempest howling,
Prodigals' curses and self-disdain.
Sorrow and misery, well what matter,
There is an end unto every pain.

“ He who doth sit in yonder palace,
He who doth sleep—”

“ I say, hold hard, Seymour,” cried Luttrell, “ I cannot stand this. It is too melancholy.”

He had scarcely uttered the words, when one of the servants entered, and told him that a gentleman wished to see him in the waiting-room.

“ Who the devil is it ?” said Luttrell impatiently.

“ He will not give his name,” replied the servant ; “ he says, however, that it is on a matter of the greatest importance to you, that he must see your Lordship.”

“ Confound these fellows, what bores they are !” said Luttrell.

“ I should think, Linton, it must be one of your numerous victims in disguise, or a magnificent dun, who does the thing *en prince*,” said Wingrove. “ *Au revoir*, my dear fellow,

we will drink your health,” he shouted after him, as Luttrell left the room.

“ Who is it, Saunders ?” said Seymour to the servant, when the door was closed.

“ I do not know, sir,” he replied. “ I told the gentleman that his lordship was at dinner, but he said that he did not care for that, he must see him on a matter of great importance ; and he seemed so like a gentleman that I came to inform his lordship.”

When Luttrell entered the waiting-room, he saw a person standing by the mantel-piece, with his head resting on his hand ; he was tall, very pale, with a compressed lip, which showed forced resolution, and painful reflection. Luttrell was very much excited—his face was flushed with wine. The melancholy song following the quantity of wine he drank had made him savagely tipsy.

“ I beg your pardon, sir,” said he, with an impudent rollicking air. “ Will you have the goodness to tell me what your important business is that you disturb me when I am dining with my friends ? You are——”

“ You are,” interrupted Ernest, for it was he, “ you are Lord Linton, formerly Mr. Luttrell ?”

“ Well, sir,” said Lord Linton.

“ I called at your lordship's house about two hours since ; your servant told me that he thought you were dining here, so I lost no time in coming.”

“ You have chosen rather an inconvenient hour, Mr. ——”

“ No hour is inconvenient, my lord, for the business I have with you ; there is no hour at which it is not meet and proper to call on a gentleman to fulfil an honourable pledge ; to call on a Christian to save a human being from perishing ; there is no hour more convenient than the present, to tell you, my lord, that you have sacrificed truth to falsehood ! honour to selfishness ! there is no hour in which it is more suitable for me to warn you, that unless you perform your promise to that poor girl you trifled with at Beaumaris, the day of retribution will fall upon you, and that retribution will be deliberate and dark as your crime.”

Luttrell was no coward, but the firmness of Ernest's voice staggered him ; his face flushed, he hesitated, and then said, “ What girl ? what are you speaking of, sir ? there is no girl.”

“ Don't soil your lips, my lord, with an untruth ? you remember Miss Vane ?”

“ And who are you, sir ?” said Luttrell,

with a louder voice, for he was fast recovering his shaken nerves. "Who are you who dare——"

"I will not tell you who I am, my lord," resumed Ernest; "because I would have you do an honourable action of your own free will. I tell you, my lord, that I am acquainted with all the circumstances of the case; that this deed shall not be passed over in silence; but I would not drive you into marriage, I would not use compulsion."

"Compulsion!" cried Luttrell; "compulsion to marry a common country girl! I, who am on the point of marrying the greatest heiress in England; compulsion! by Jove, sir, you must be drunk."

"I shall not retort your ribaldry, my lord," replied Ernest; but as he spoke his voice trembled, and his cheek grew paler than dead ashes. "I have only to tell your lordship, as this information may, in some degree, alter your arrangements, that you do not marry Miss Leslie; she is engaged to another."

"Not marry Miss Leslie?" gasped forth Luttrell. "Engaged to another! what other? Speak, will you, sir?"

A smile of joy, such as the most malignant spirit might have envied, crossed Ernest's face, as he pronounced the words, "She is engaged to me."

Luttrell fell back against the table; the noise that he made brought the whole party to the door. Luttrell speedily recovered himself, and seeing the faces of his friends, exclaimed, "Don't let that fellow escape, he is a black-guard, a liar, a scoundrel, come to insult me. Don't let him escape, I say."

But there did not seem to be on Ernest's part any intention or desire to leave the room, and his calm still suppressed indignation, imposed on those who were standing round. "You need not, gentlemen," said he, "be afraid of my wishing to leave the room, when I tell you my object in coming here; that my name is Ernest Vane; and that man, having promised to marry my sister, and compromised her character in the eyes of the world, has broken his pledge."

He then turned round to Luttrell, without giving himself time for reflection. "Yes, sir," he said, "I rejoice that your friends are here; for publicly in their presence I denounce you as a liar and a scoundrel. Did you select your victim from amongst those with whom you were in the habit of associating, there at least people would have been on their guard against you. No, sir, you came into the country—

you took an unsophisticated girl—a mere child. You won her affections through falsehood; yes, through falsehood. I know the code of what some men call fashion permits much, but does it permit a man to be a coward? Does it permit a man to be a liar? For you lied again to me this moment, and denied the knowledge of my sister. Does it permit a man to blast a home, to send the young to an untimely grave, with a broken heart? A man who does these things is a man to be spurned, as I now spurn you."

Luttrell had remained silent, motionless, overcome; there was a terrible pause—of a sudden he flew at Ernest and endeavoured to strike him, but the blow fell short.

Then this man, so apparently composed, so resolute, so seemingly calm, rose in the majesty of passion; he felled Luttrell at once to the ground, and as he lay there almost senseless, Ernest felt that a deed had been done from which there was no withdrawal.

"Send for the police," cried one of the party; they had sympathised with him previously, but now they turned against him; they did not think of the provocation he had received.

"No," said Luttrell, rising in pain, and speaking with wonderful calmness, "we will have no police. I thank Mr. Vane for this opportunity he has given me of meeting him; we stand now on equal ground;" and his features were in his turn illuminated by hate and vengeance. "Mr. Vane will give his card and the name of some friend to one of you, and every one present must solemnly promise not to breathe a word of this quarrel."

Luttrell spoke now in a cool collected voice. He was satisfied that in some small measure he would now obtain the sympathy of his friends.

"Melville," said Luttrell, turning to one of the circle, "will you act for me in this matter?"

After a little consideration and hesitation, Mr. Melville assented.

Fortunately, at this moment Ernest heard the name of Colonel Staunton pronounced by the servant outside; he remembered Colonel Staunton when he was quartered at Nottingham some years previously, at which time they had become great friends. He had since exchanged into the command of one of the Household Regiments, and was quartered at Knightsbridge.

"Certainly," said Ernest, "Mr. Melville shall hear from me immediately; I am ac—

quainted with Colonel Staunton, and will address myself to him."

He was the very best man Ernest could have selected, even if he had had more time to make up his mind. Colonel Staunton combined a thorough knowledge of the world with the most approved courage, and manners of the most perfect refinement; he possessed the very singular faculty of obtaining the love of the officers and privates in his regiment, and of uniting a strict adherence to duty with an affectionate and almost parental indulgence; it might have been said of him, as of Monmouth, though no one knew better how to resent an injury, none could more readily or gracefully forgive one. He had been mixed up in several affairs of honour, but by his tact he generally managed to communicate his own conciliatory feelings to others, and they who came armed against each other not unfrequently parted as friends.

This, however, was a far more serious affair than any he had ever embarked in. At the first glance of the matter, he saw the grave responsibility of his position; he knew that if the encounter terminated fatally on either side, his professional advancement was at an end, but he did not heed this risk. He always said that he considered the greatest obligation in life was the obligation of friendship; he had known Ernest for some time, and loved him; so when this young man, thrown friendless into London, and involved in so terrible a quarrel, appealed to him for his support, he willingly gave it.

They were closeted in a room together.

"And now, Mr. Vane," said Colonel Staunton, "it is not to indulge in any idle curiosity, but this is so serious a case, I may be pardoned for asking you for all information. What insult had Lord Linton, in the first instance, put upon you? At the present I only know that you were gravely injured by him."

It was with compressed lips, and a suppressed groan, Ernest replied, "He has trifled with the affections of my sister, Algitha, with whom, you may remember, you used to play. He promised to marry her, and broke his word, and he brutally compromised her character in the face of all her family and acquaintances."

"Confound him!" muttered Colonel Staunton. "And he still refuses to marry her?"

"Yes."

"You, I suppose, on meeting him just now, used very strong language to him?"

"The strongest," replied Ernest, "that

one man can use to another, but not too strong for the rank offence. You know how guileless and gentle-spirited Algitha is. Well, I ask you, Colonel Staunton, was not the conduct of this man towards her most infamous? did he not merit the epithets of liar and scoundrel which I applied to him?"

"And then——" said the Colonel.

"He endeavoured to strike me," continued Ernest, "and I smote him to the ground."

"I will not pretend to say, my dear friend," said the Colonel, after a long pause, "how far you have reason to regret having been hurried into such extreme violence, nor is it a matter worth considering now, for it is quite evident that no apology can be given or taken on either side; I tell you so at once. As for Lord Linton, whether he will fire at you or not, I cannot pretend to judge. It is my opinion that he ought not to do so; but men fight desperately for their lives. However, I will meet Mr. Melville immediately, and call at your hotel, to let you know what hour and place we fix on for the meeting, the earlier, I should think, the better. I am deeply grieved at all this, but think it better to explain to you at once that there is no room for negotiation on either side; it would only be painful, and lead to still greater exasperation. All I can do is to see fair play, and thus prove my friendship for you. Good night, and God bless you!"

Colonel Staunton left him, and then Ernest turned to leave the club. The circumstance of a person so distinguished as Colonel Staunton having taken his part a little raised him in the opinion of the loungers collected on the steps, who receive all their impressions through the medium of other people. It was not until Ernest was in the street, and had time to reflect on all that had passed, that the terrible nature of his position forced itself upon him. Those men who say they are indifferent about fighting a duel must be either broken-hearted or cowards. Ernest was neither; he was very sad and distressed at Algitha's position, but the love of Ida filled his heart; he had a deep sense of the responsibilities of life, and the awfulness of being summoned, unprepared, into another world; and then the possibility of dying at a moment when a new life was ready to be united to his own, and a new world of affection was dawning on him, was very sad. On no light and trivial ground would Ernest have consented to have been led into a duel; he never would have played a part in a miserable farce, as so

many are apt to do; but in the present instance he had no alternative. He could only regard this as one of those trials which are imposed on men, as a duty, which must be fulfilled. Should he fire at Luttrell? it was a solemn and a fearful question.

Meanwhile, the carriages swept by him from the opera and the ball, the lights gleamed from bright windows, the music echoed down the streets, and, through the light gauze curtains in some magnificent palace, fair heads and swanlike necks might be seen bending, and graceful forms moving through an atmosphere of beauty. Ernest walked to Grosvenor Place. He stood under the wall of Buckingham-gardens, and looked up at a window where he saw a light, and which he hoped was Ida's. It was hers—he saw her come to the window and look forth upon the night; a night as beautiful as the gazer—a night when, if on any night, black and stormy passions should have been at rest. Ernest wept, as in his heart he blessed Ida—whom he had now a right to call his own Ida—what would he not have given to have recalled those few moments which he had passed with her that day, those instants of supreme joy. As men, removing the first soil from the earth, find minerals of various strengths below, of the existence of which there had been no indication on the surface, so Ernest discovered in his heart passions which had, till now, lain almost concealed—vengeance and love. There was a strength of character now developing in Ernest, of the force of which he himself had previously no idea.

The light was extinguished—and with it every hope that had buoyed him up. He returned with slow steps to the hotel to write a few farewell lines to Ida and Algitha, and to make the necessary arrangements for his sister's comfort. As he entered the door, the porter put a note into his hand. It merely contained a card of Colonel Staunton's, with these few words,—“Putney Heath, at 6 o'clock. Call for me in a cab at Knightsbridge, and I will take you on in my phaeton. I will see to everything.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ERNEST passed a sleepless night. His letters to Ida and Algitha and his last directions were not finished until nearly four o'clock. He had desired the servant to call him at five and to order a cab. When he rose and opened the window, it struck him that the atmosphere had never seemed so still and heavy; it

might have been his own imagination, for men are so apt to enlist the sympathy of nature in any of their undertakings, and to imagine signs in the sky when there are none whatever. But Ernest had little time for reflection; he sat down for a moment to think whether he could add anything to what he had already said to Ida. But there was no language that could more forcibly express his passion and love at that last moment; he had a presentiment that this was no formal meeting—that it was a question of existence—of man against man. He knelt down and tried to pray, but rose in despair at his want of faith, for the language of prayer would not flow from his lips. He entered the cab, and in a few minutes was at Knightsbridge, and immediately shown into Colonel Staunton's room.

There was nothing in the room to show that there was anything more in contemplation than an ordinary excursion. As Colonel Staunton had written to him, all the arrangements had been made.

“The phaeton is waiting at the Park entrance,” said the colonel, after he had shaken him affectionately by the hand. “Have you had anything to eat?”

“Nothing,” answered Ernest.

“That will never do,” said the Colonel, pouring him out a cup of strong coffee. “Pray drink this off—it will steady your nerves.”

Ernest did as the Colonel advised.

“And now,” said the Colonel, “we must go.”

“And the surgeon?” asked Ernest.

“Mr. Melville said he would arrange about him,” was the reply.

They got into the phaeton. The heaviness of the morning, if it had ever existed, had passed away; the sky was blue as an Italian lake, the air balmy and soft as the breath of love; the horses, fresh and snuffing the morning air, bounded with enjoyment. Oh, what a day, to go forth on such a deed! two men, with at most but a span of existence in them, going to destroy the life in each other's breast—and yet who, under such circumstances, would not act as Ernest did?

After the Colonel had got his horses properly under command, he turned to Ernest.

“I have been thinking,” he said, “all night about your case. I don't know, Vane, what your opinions of duelling may be, but I know that some people have crotchets about firing at another man; if you have any, you must dispel them on the present occasion, and fire

as directly as possible, or your life will be sacrificed."

"You think then that Lord Linton will not fire wide?" asked Ernest.

"I saw Lord Linton," replied Colonel Staunton, "at Melville's last night, when I called on him after leaving you, and if I ever saw vengeance written in a man's eye, it was written in his; so fire point blank."

Ernest listened attentively, but inwardly resolved if possible, to miss his adversary. "And now," said the Colonel (for they were crossing Putney Bridge), "however painful the subject is to me, I must ask you, if you have any directions, in the unhappy event of the duel terminating fatally?"

Ernest took out the letters and his will. The Colonel put them into the inner pocket of his coat, and buttoned it tightly over his chest. "Tell her to whom one of the letters is addressed, tell Miss Leslie, should I chance to fall, that her name will be written on my heart."

"I will tell her everything," murmured Colonel Staunton, while a tear stood in his eye.

They had reached the ground; it was a small copse situated between Roehampton and the Kingston road; the whole ground was covered with gorse and heather; far and wide the birds were chirping; it was a morning that makes men love the world, while they worship the God who made it.

Luttrell with Mr. Melville and the surgeon had arrived. Luttrell raised his hat slightly, and Ernest returned the salute.

Luttrell was quite calm and collected; no one could detect the least indication of fear in the expression of his countenance. His philosophy, cold sensual philosophy, wretched as it was, would carry him through the trial. When Ernest saw his adversary, the feelings of vengeance and hate again filled his heart.

The seconds retired together to confer for a few moments. Luttrell had a light cane in his hand, and was knocking off the heads of some cowslips, with an affectation of indifference. Ernest stood still and reserved, at a distance.

The seconds had measured the ground, they had put the principals in their places, when Colonel Staunton observed that the rising sun fell directly on Ernest's sight, and shone on the pistol barrel.

"This will never do," he said to Mr. Melville. "Mr. Vane cannot see at all; we must take ground elsewhere."

"We have measured it once," said Mr. Melville, somewhat sulkily; "we cannot shift with the sun; it is a mere accident, and as fair for one as the other. We tossed up for places."

"Measure it somewhere else, Melville," said Luttrell; "give Mr. Vane every chance." He said it with an apparent sneer, that made Ernest's blood boil; his thirst for blood was rising within him, and he prayed that he might command his temper sufficiently to fire wide.

"Let it be as it is, Colonel Staunton. I will stay where I am. I am resolved not to move," exclaimed Ernest.

"Very well," said the Colonel, retiring; "when I drop my handkerchief you will fire; then, and not till then."

It was an awful moment; the Colonel stood at a short distance, the handkerchief was raised—it fell.

Luttrell's bullet passed through Ernest's hat—Ernest had, as he intended, fired wide.

"We load again," said Mr. Melville, approaching the Colonel.

"You may do as you like, Mr. Melville," said Colonel Staunton; "but all I can say is this, that, if you insist on another shot, it is little short of murder; for my principal fired wide. You must have seen it yourself."

"It struck me it was a wide shot," said Mr. Melville coolly; "but it does not follow that Mr. Vane missed Lord Linton purposely."

"We must refer it to the principals," said the Colonel; "it is too serious a case for us to judge."

Luttrell and Ernest were standing glaring at each other; the thirst for vengeance was now apparent in both.

"Do you ask for another shot, my Lord?" said Mr. Melville aloud.

The answer was "Yes," a slow and deliberate yes.

"Will you give Lord Linton another shot, Mr. Vane?" asked Colonel Staunton.

He, too, answered in the affirmative.

The Colonel sighed deeply, and whispered, as he approached Ernest, "I told you, Vane, what the case would be; now, for your life's sake, don't fire wide, or he will murder you; it is self-defence; fire low; Mr. Melville gives the signal this time." And the Colonel retired.

Again the question was asked, "Are you both ready?"

They answered together in the affirmative, and the handkerchief fell.

They both fired.

There was a hollow crack, as when a bullet hits a noble stag on the hills of Glenfiddich, a dead blank sound; then a heavy fall; no convulsions, no movement, no cry; the ball had passed through Ernest's lower jaw; his ball had slightly grazed Luttrell's arm.

It was a fearful scene to contemplate, under a bright August sun; Colonel Staunton, Mr. Melville, and the surgeon, stood round the body; the surgeon felt the pulse; "There is no hope," he said, "of his recovery; but he may linger a few hours."

Luttrell approached, pale, but yet stern and uncompromising. "Is there no hope?" said he to the surgeon. The surgeon was too much occupied to reply, but Colonel Staunton answered haughtily and coldly, "No, my Lord, there is none."

"It was his destiny," muttered Luttrell; "he rushed upon it."

Colonel Staunton made no answer; but he suggested that they should put Mr. Vane in Mr. Melville's post-chaise, while he lent Mr. Melville his phaeton; this arrangement was immediately made; not a moment was lost in carrying Ernest to the carriage, where the kind Colonel seated himself, and supported his head on his knees.

The post-boy drove at once to the Burlington Hotel, and when the Colonel had seen Ernest put carefully to bed, he went off on his next distressing duty to Ida.

The moment he appeared, Ida, who had been waiting anxiously for Ernest, saw that some fearful calamity had happened; she had passed a wretched night; for notwithstanding her intimate knowledge of Ernest's opinions and character, she could not but foresee the possibility of serious consequences when he met Luttrell; at the same time she was not so selfish as to interfere between him and Algitha's interests.

She grew very pale. Colonel Staunton knew that fine speeches, empty exordiums, are on such occasions quite out of place; that it is far better at once to tell the truth; so, with a look of deep sorrow, he told her that he was the bearer of a letter from Ernest, who had been the victim of an unfortunate encounter, and he at once put the letter into her hand.

She broke the seal, and read it from the commencement to the conclusion; she rose, apparently calm and tranquil, and yet her eyes gleamed with an unusual light, and the muscles of her face were working involunta-

rily. "You have a carriage here, Colonel Staunton," she said quietly.

He answered in the affirmative.

She threw a handkerchief over her head; the Colonel knew what she desired, and never spoke a word to her—while she seized his hand and pressed it convulsively.

He took her down stairs, put her into the carriage, and whispered the servant to tell the coachman to drive to the hotel where Ernest was lying.

When they entered the hall, the servants were standing together in groups, and whispering mysteriously; the Colonel feared the worst.

They went up stairs; worst of all omens, there was no obsequious physician to oppose their entrance into the sick-room; a nurse was just leaving it; she pointed to the door, by which they were to enter.

The blinds had been drawn down, for the sun mocks the countenance of death, and renders it only more ghastly; all was still; there was no longer any advice, any difference of opinion, any obtruding of counsel, any officious interference, any wrestling with fate.

And Ida knelt beside the lifeless body of Ernest Vane.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WE will not trespass upon grief, for it is sacred; we will not tell of the long days and longer nights of agony, passed by those who mourn hopelessly for the dead. It is the story of every street we drive through; at one time or another, of every house that we inhabit. How great must that faith be that can survive the grave; how strong the belief which enables us to expect to meet the loved object again. Ida was stunned by the blow; for a time, however, she bore up against it, but her heart received a shock which no time could cure.

But her life was not very long. Her story will now be told in a few lines. Mr. Leslie recovered slowly from his attack, but subsequently had a relapse, and then remained in a state of dotage. Castle Melwood was again advertised for sale, for that was the only point on which Ida resisted his will; she never would return there again. It was purchased by a great baronial family, who objected to all the vulgar man's furniture (so they styled Mr. Leslie) as much as he had objected to the ancestral pictures of the Rochdales. They returned again to the neighbourhood of Liverpool, and there, after a few years had elapsed,

he talked Ida into marrying an old peer, old enough to be her grandfather; for Mr. Leslie was full of vanities and ambitions as ever. "I hope," said the poor girl, "I shall die soon." And her prayer was heard—for she only survived the marriage a few months.

Algitha also married. Painful as it is to state, she did not die. Alas! how many do survive shocks and losses, which for the glory of human nature ought to break the heart. See how indifferent the old become to death in whatever shape that death may present itself. In the death of a dear friend, of a beloved brother, of a heart they have trusted, and from which they believed that nothing could separate them. Algitha some time after married, and that marriage was perhaps the most fatal to happiness that a girl of quick imagination could possibly make. She married a man of a rude vulgar tone of mind, who persisted in regarding his wife as nothing more than a better kind of housekeeper. For her the punishment was terrible. She

had lived in a world of imagination, married to a man with whom she had not one feeling, one sympathy, in common. Then comes the question—why did she marry him?—and the answer is that which is made every day—because she did not know his real character, and she had become indifferent to all affection.

But, in truth, her husband did not feel or know to how great humiliation and suffering he was exposing his wife. He meant to be kind, but his kindness was of that brutal coarse description, to which positive cruelty is preferable. He did not understand, even if he was ever told it, that women place their happiness in trifles, in the thousand and one incidents of life which it is not possible to chronicle, but which to them are matters of the last importance.

Alas! we are aware that they are reproached, frequently bitterly reproached, for attaching so much importance to matters of little or no value, and yet these trivial circumstances, these contemptible interests, are sufficient to exercise a never-ceasing influence on their happiness; it is on account of these insignificances and trifles that they cast their lot into the lap, and brave all the uncertainty and doubt with which their married life is encompassed.

For these trifles, contemptible as they may seem, women are frequently prepared to brave much sorrow and great privation. All this they can meet with unflinching courage; it

is not the material ills of life that affect them; on their minds the luxuries or the pomps of life have little influence; you may deprive a woman of all these, and she will scarcely deign to lament them; but there is one thing she cannot bear, that is, indifference and contempt.

And if men, in their strength and power, treat as trifles those things which are most precious to her, is it noble on their part to deprive the woman of all those refinements of love, of all those delicate attentions, of all that homage to which she attaches so great importance, and the possession of which would do more to preserve her affections than the richest and most costly gifts?

Algitha felt the full misery of an existence which drags on in one long dull monotony. She had not even good ground for complaint against her husband; he was not in love with her, and yet he never outraged her feelings; he was not kind to her, and yet he never spoke harshly; if she burst out into a strain of passion or enthusiasm, he smiled, as she felt, contemptuously; he always called her "dear;" he seemed to take a great interest in her health; he never missed attending her to whatever party she happened to be engaged; and yet, in spite of all this, her life with that man was hell! He forgot nothing, and she felt, if the occasion for forgiveness should ever arise, he would forgive nothing.

What was her horror, a few weeks after her wedding, to hear him talking of a lady who was supposed to have too well loved another before marriage. Algitha grew pale as death, when she heard her husband assert that a woman who could thus deceive a man was almost beyond the pale of forgiveness; that she was worthy of being classed with the veriest outcasts which crowd the streets; and that such a person should be doomed to eat her bread in the workhouse. Although never attached to him, Algitha had managed to overcome her first mistrust of her husband when this conversation took place; but from that moment her life became a curse to her; every word he said appeared to her affrighted imagination to be an allusion to the past;—"thus conscience doth make cowards of us all," and her whole mind was so entirely occupied with the life of her youth, that she thought every one was equally interested in it; she had three children, and every word that they said filled her with alarm. Once or twice, when her husband was standing near them, they made some remark, which indi-

rectly referred to their relations at Beaumaris, and then she was wholly unable to control her emotions, while he looked on with a calm, cold, suspicious countenance; she would have given all she possessed to have separated from that man; but he never brought matters to this point, and his perfect apathy chilled not only her affection, but even her warmth of temper. He was one of those persons with whom it is impossible to bring matters to issue, so callous, so selfish, so calm, so cruelly civil and contemptuously courteous. As the lava which bursts out boiling from Hecla is immediately congealed by the frost, so the warmth of Algitha's heart was arrested in its progress by the frozen bosom against which it was pressed.

Thus she lived, if such an existence can be called living; but she, in her turn, got over the crisis, and became worldly and bitter; all the visions of her childhood had passed by her—all the day-dreams in which she had indulged had turned out to be bitter mockeries. We who have known her in youth, should we have known her again in age? Alas! no; to what strange uses do we come! Are we the same persons at different periods of our lives? Do we see with the same eyes—love with the same love,—believe in the same creed?

We bid farewell to Algitha—but there is still another chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was a cold bitter November night, about three years after these events had taken place; the sleet had been drifting down the streets, leaving the pavement slippery and dangerous. In a low quarter of London, in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, a man might be seen, reeling his way, it might be homeward, or perhaps rather in search of a home. He was thin, emaciated by illness and low dissipation. There were however the evidences of refinement in his features; his hands, white and delicate, proved that he had once lived in a very different society to that which inhabited this district. It was Luttrell, or, as he now called himself, Mr. Spence. After the fatal duel we have described, he was compelled to conceal himself for a long time. There was something so atrocious in the whole case, that even his old friends could not take his part. Lord Elversfoot would not hear his name mentioned. As for Lady Sandbeck, she died a few months afterwards, leaving everything to a distant relative. The

Government going out of office in 1834 drove Lord Elversfoot from all his places. Luckily he had a small pension, with which he retired to the Continent, not taking the least trouble about his son, whether he was alive or dead. For some time Luttrell retained his title; it enabled him to live upon a very third-rate society; but unfortunately he could not even now control his disposition to intrigue, and another scandalous event drove him into the filthiest purlieus of London, almost penniless, and wholly degraded.

The life he now led was such as happily few people could picture to themselves; and yet it is a common life, and Luttrell's is not a singular instance of men of fashion falling into it. It is quite surprising how many men, who have at one time or another played a part in London society, die without a roof to shelter them, or perish in some half-built house, on the outskirts of the great city. Luttrell retired amongst the low coarse creatures, the cold, callous, brutal ruffians, with whom in former days, in moments of his grossest dissipation, he used to associate.

These people, strange to say, had a kind of deference for him because he was a Lord. They always spoke of him as "the Lord," although, as we have stated, he had taken the name of Spence. In one of the dens with which the city abounds, he would play with the most abandoned and the commonest profligates at halfpenny commerce; there he would vie with the lowest and most brutal in language that devils would have shrunk from hearing. He was looked up to by this choice circle, for he had a keen intellect, and, equal to them in the slang of this foul district, he had that power of seizing an idea quickly in which they were wanting.

On this night he had just left a gin-palace. He had drunk on this occasion to drown care, for during the day Nemesis had been present to him, and the iron had entered into his soul. He had done his best to forget himself, and so intoxicated was he, that he had to take hold of some railings to support himself on the slippery pavement. At that moment a man pushed rudely by him; to collar him and endeavour to throw him on the pavement was Luttrell's impulse.

"Hands off, my man, or I'll knock you to pieces," cried the other, who was much smaller than Luttrell.

"You will, will you—come on then!" said Luttrell; he was in a most quarrelsome humour.

A crowd had immediately collected. "Why, it's our Lord," cried one of the mob. "Give him fair play," said another. "Make a ring;" "pitch into him." "Hurra, there, he's down;" "well done, little man!" They fought like lunatics. For a short time Luttrell had the best of it, but he was no match in the long run for his burly and sober antagonist. Suddenly Luttrell was tripped up, his head came with fearful violence against the iron railings, and the blood flowed in a stream on the pavement.

"There, I think as how I have served him out, and the sooner I am off the better," cried his opponent. And he lost no time in putting his theory into practice. "Take him up gently," said one of the men. "Where is he to be carried to? Where does he live?" were the questions asked. No one in that circle could answer them; for his friends had all rushed away when they saw how serious the matter had become. A policeman approached. "Bring a stretcher," he said; "we will carry him to the hospital."

At that moment a woman drew near, bent down on the icy pavement, and looked into Luttrell's face, parted the hair from his forehead, and with a faint scream sunk on the ground. "No, no," she exclaimed; "not to the hospital. I know him well; take him to my room—it is close by—do, for God's sake!"

"Does any one know the woman?" said the policeman.

"I do," said one of the bystanders, of a rather better class than the rest. "She is a good well-behaved girl. We call her the Lady-bird, she is so neat and nice, and every one likes her."

The policeman directed them to carry him to her room—for it was evident that he was in a dying state, and the hospital was far distant. They took him up, and the young girl led the way to her home. It looked a wretched house on the outside, nor did it improve as you entered. The staircase was narrow, and half broken; the landing-places loathsome; but once in her room, desolate as it was, there was every appearance of refined taste. A few flowers, which were evidently tended with the greatest care, filled two or three small china vases; there were some handsomely-bound books scattered about; the small bed-room was hung with poor but simple and rather graceful furniture; but if the room itself gave evidence that its occupier was of a superior class, you could not have mistaken her so soon as she removed her

bonnet and shawl. Her dress, which came high up in the neck, was neatly and even elegantly made; it fitted to the waist so as to show its perfection and its beauty. Her hair was delicately braided, and when she took off her gloves, she had a hand which might well have befitted the favoured beauty of the highest rank. There was a delicacy in her features, and an aristocracy of birth about her, which even these rude men appreciated, for they involuntarily removed their hats when she gave them any directions about Luttrell. While they were present in the room she gave no expression to her feelings; but when they had left it in search of a doctor, she then sobbed and sighed as though her heart would break.

She knelt down first before a picture, which represented a house in a valley, surrounded with jagged mountains, and cold pointed glaciers. She drew from her dress a small gold cross, and kissed it reverently; and then she knelt by that man's bedside, smoothed his ruffled pillow, leant over him, and breathed on that pain-worn harassed countenance. Poor child! she thought the breath of love might restore him to consciousness; but no, he lay there silent, still, and deathlike.

It is a terrible thing to stand in the chamber of the dying, when the awful silence is only disturbed by the thick breathing of the sufferer; to feel that the small remnant of life before you is growing less and less every moment; to know that before the minute hand of the clock has made one circle, the being before you will know those awful mysteries, which have divided churches, nations, and families, but that for him this knowledge will be of no avail—for to him there is no return! no repentance!

There on that poor truckle bed lay the heir to the house of Luttrell. Where were all the hopes, the aspirations of his family? Where was the life he had so greatly loved, and the pleasures which he had so ardently pursued? That there was little or no hope of his recovery was evident to the most unpractised eye. At intervals the contortions of his countenance were fearful; then immediately it would relapse again into the fixed look of confirmed anguish more terrible than even the acute expression of pain. What a contrast between the apartment in which he was lying, and the silken refinements to which from his youth he had been accustomed; yet she to whom the room belonged had done all that the taste of a delicate woman could effect, to render it

comfortable. The small ornaments scattered about had been evidently saved from the wreck of former luxury; but there was that in the room which ennobled the owner more than its refinement; there were the evidences of patient industry, the proofs that her life was a life of honest labour; there were the drawings at which she used to toil from morning to night; some half finished, others ready for sale, and on the mantel-piece was a list of the engagements she had undertaken.

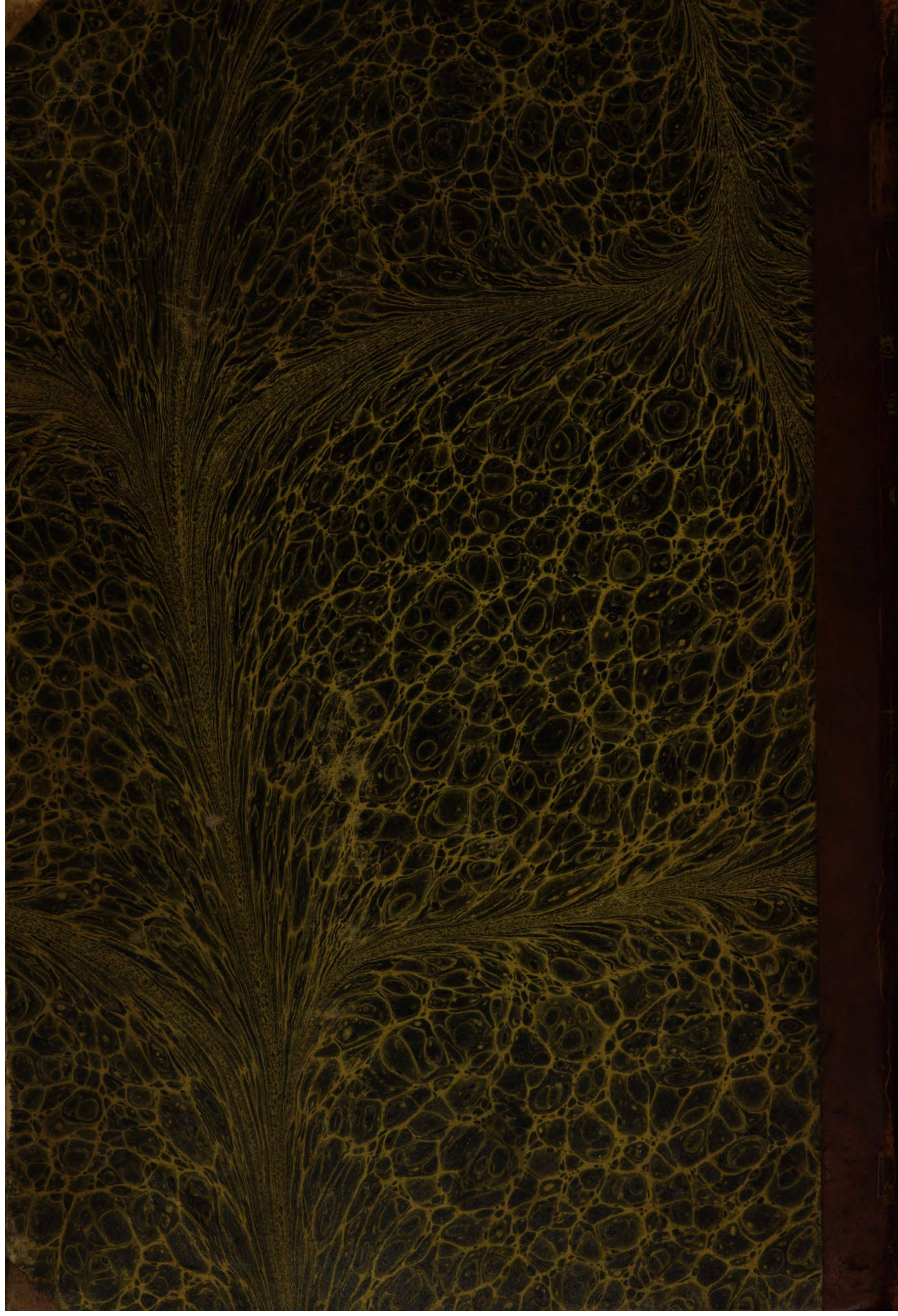
Nor was this labour and sacrifice for herself alone; there was a poor girl in the floor above who had long been ill, and who had not the same power of resisting temptation, or the same source of profitable industry which this young girl possessed. It was this ministering angel of comfort who used to pay the doctor, procure food, and who acted as a servant to the poor creature who was perishing under the same roof. The little which remained for herself after the deduction of these expenses was the merest trifle, but the people in the neighbourhood were in their turn kind to her; for the most hardened love virtue, and respect innocence. We little think how much good there is in some of those wretched purlieus of London, which we only associate with infamy; nor do we estimate sufficiently highly the sacrifices which the poor make for one another, the charity and self-denial which they practise in their daily intercourse.

The minutes passed by rapidly, still no doctor arrived, and by the bed-side of the sufferer the girl remained kneeling, with his cold, bloodless, clammy hand pressed in her own. She prayed for him who never prayed for himself; the warm tears trickled down her bosom, and moistened his arm. Again and again she kissed the gold cross fervently, and then, with reverent gesture and supplicating attitude, she pressed it to his lips.

Was it a new faith that possessed him, or did a love he had never been worthy of in life penetrate his soul when he was dying? No one can disclose the secrets of his heart's prison-house; but when the cross touched his lips, with a fearful gasp, a terrible death-struggle, he opened his eyes; they were fixed passionately, earnestly, on the countenance of the sweet Magdalene bending over him—he uttered the name of “MARIE,” and, with the exertion, his life passed from him.

Thus some of the lights and shadows of life have been recorded in no exaggerated language. Romances such as these are passing before us every day. Talk of the realities of life, the phrase is an empty one; to men with living hearts and affections all life is romantic, mysterious, indefinite. We have had presented to us youth and age, innocence and guilt, virtue and vice, life and death; are these materials ever wanting in the world? Can we traverse a street without meeting one man dissipated and world-worn, his heart strewn with broken promises and shattered creeds; another full of energy, chivalry, and great purposes? Why pursue the antithesis of character, which, like the antagonism of social life, is apparent to all who observe, and mourned over by all who feel? Night and morning, darkness and light! here are the elements of our life, out of which we must form our day; but as in night and morning, in light and darkness, there is one thing common to both, that is the sweet balmy air of heaven, so to us, in the contrasts of our life, there is one blessing which never deserts a man—a woman's love. We have seen the virtuous, the gallant, the noble-hearted dying; more recently, the heartless, the debauched profligate perishing in despair—and by the death-bed of each a woman was kneeling.

THE END.



Cochrane, Alex. Baillie

Ernest Vane

Paris 1850

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